

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

Between THE Lines™

MAKING RUTH PROUD 25 Years Later

As the center that bears her name hits a milestone anniversary, Ruth Ellis' mission lives on

By Sarah Bricker Hunt

FALL TRAVEL GUIDE

From Clothing-Optional Adventures
to Classic Lake Michigan Fun

REMEMBERING JUSTIN ALESNA

Community Mourns, Honors a
Detroit Artist Gone Too Soon

MICHIGAN LIGHTS UP THE DNC

5 Convention Moments We
Won't Soon Forget

Dr. Paul Benson's

**Be
Well**
Medical
Center

EST. 1980: THE ORIGINAL LGBTQ CLINIC IN MICHIGAN

The Right Choice for Your Health

Since 1980, Be Well Medical Center has delivered compassionate, patient-centered healthcare. Led by Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein, our dedicated team prioritizes your well-being. As credentialed HIV specialists, we offer PrEP and Doxy PrEP. Our inclusive approach ensures top-quality care for all backgrounds and lifestyles.

We are thrilled to introduce Dr. Andrew Roberts, a dedicated pediatrician specializing in care for individuals from birth to 21 years. Our clinic is now a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ youth seeking primary care.



Dr. Andrew Roberts with a Be Well Medical Center patient.

Four Locations



Be Well Medical Center

1964 11 Mile Rd,
Berkley, MI 48072
248-544-9300



Osborn Family Medical Clinic

13560 East McNichols Rd,
Detroit, MI 48205
248 544-9300



Community Health Awareness Group

1300 West Fort St.,
Detroit, MI 48226
313-963-3434 x118



Liv Well Clinic

5103 West Pierson St.
Flint, MI 48504
810-21-0605



Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein

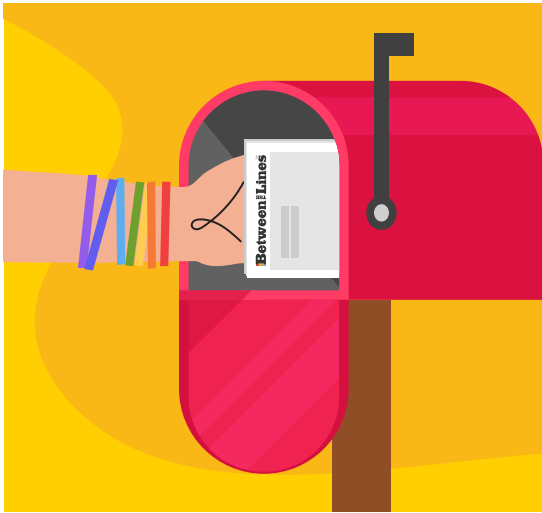


- 4 5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish
- 6 5 Michigan Moments From the 2024 DNC We're Still Talking About
- 7 A Community Mourns Detroit Artist Justin Alesna After His Unexpected Death at 36
- 8 'Ruth Would Be Mighty Proud': As the Center That Bears Her Name Turns 25, Ruth Ellis' Mission Lives On
- 10 Creep of the Week: Trump's Claim That Transgender Kids Get Surgeries At School Should Disqualify Him From Office
- 11 The Scroll: Ford Backs Away from 'Polarizing Issues' — Like Human Rights
- 12 Walk in the (Fabulous) Shoes of Local Queer Trailblazers During the Ann Arbor District Library LGBTQ+ Walking Tour
- 14 Michigan LGBTQ+ Leaders Push Back After Former State GOP Chair Uses Gay Slur
- 20 A Ferry Tale: How a 'Ring of Keys' and a Boat Ride Across Lake Michigan Opened Up My Whole World
- 24 Sunshine and New (Nude) Friendships: Heading South for a Gay Old Time
- 25 How It Really Feels to Be Out and Proud in These Michigan Destinations

Page 16



Ruth Ellis during the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the opening of the Ruth Ellis Center in 1999. Photo: Jason A. Michael



Delivered ~~Straight~~ to Your Mailbox

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and get BTL delivered to your door for just \$95/year or \$10/month.

WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE

VOL. 3236 • SEPTEMBER 5, 2024
ISSUE 1261

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP
www.pridesource.com
Phone 734-263-1476

PUBLISHERS
Benjamin Jenkins
benjamin@pridesource.com

Publishers Emeritus: Jan Stevenson & Susan Horowitz

EDITORIAL
Editorial Director
Chris Azzopardi
chris@pridesource.com

Managing Editor
Sarah Bricker Hunt
sarah@pridesource.com

Staff Content Creator
Liam Clymer
liam@pridesource.com

CREATIVE
Cartoonist
Paul Berg

Graphic Designer
Sarah Wolf

Contributing Photographers
Andrew Potter, Andrew Cohen

ADVERTISING & SALES
sales@pridesource.com

Carolyn Cardenas
734-263-1476
carolyn@pridesource.com

Tim Powers
734-263-1475
tim@pridesource.com

Ann/Andy Cox
anncox@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative
Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

MEMBER OF
Michigan Press Association
National LGBT Media Association
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber
Q Syndicate



2022 AWARD WINNER



"Pride Source"



Follow us @pridesource



@pridesourcemedia



Pride Source



Email your op-eds to
editor@pridesource.com



Sign up online to receive our e-digest

Our rate cards are available online. All material appearing in Between The Lines is protected by federal copyright law and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the permission of the publishers. Between The Lines is supported by many fine advertisers, but we cannot accept responsibility for claims made by our advertisers, nor can we accept responsibility for materials provided by advertisers or their agents.

Copyright 2024

5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY LIAM CLYMER

As the dog days of summer meld into the comfortable rhythm of a busy fall, the change of season may be daunting, but worry not, friends. We aren't going to send you back to school (literally or symbolically) without arming you with plenty of opportunities for an occasional break from your grind. This time around, we're focusing our selections on empowerment. From hearing from powerful speakers at Stand with Trans or engaging the storyteller and activist inside you with The Moth, we'll get you ready to return to routine as the best version of yourself you can be.



Share Your Story with The Moth

The Moth is an organization built around providing a platform for others to tell their stories. By sharing on their website or over the air via The Moth podcast and radio hour, Moth storytellers connect with audiences across the world, bridging social divides and finding commonality with people from other walks of life. The Moth is coming to Detroit this September for a live StorySLAM, and with the theme "Elbow Grease," there's plenty of opportunity to share the inherent grit of the LGBTQ+ experience. Or, if you're interested in a more direct queer angle, The Moth invites organizational partners, which currently include Project Speak Out Loud at The Grand St. Settlement and SAGE, to help share LGBTQ+ stories.

Sept. 5, 6:30 p.m., Marble Bar (1501 Holden St., Detroit). Upcoming Detroit events at bit.ly/4dZjqOX and LGBTQ+ partner applications at themoth.org/community/lgbtq-stories.



Create with Other Women and Non-Binary Artists

Take part in The Room Project, a collective and space specifically for non-binary and women creatives that recognized a need for their community to feel safe in creating and presenting their art. The space offers events, resources and opportunities engaging with the public sphere for poets and artists. They've even previously put out an anthology showcasing the works of Room Project's writers. With sliding pricing depending on circumstances, the project truly feels as though it lives up to its ideals of providing access to the arts for all.

6513 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Learn more at roomproject.org.



Prepare to Observe Trans Empowerment Month

Stand with Trans will host a series of events this October for Trans Empowerment Month. This year's events are centered around the theme "Beyond the Binary" and promise "an array of dynamic virtual workshops, panels and performances designed to uplift and inspire transgender and non-binary youth," according to press materials. Trans Empowerment Month program coordinator Dubbs Weinblatt told BTL the events are impactful and open to all. "As a nonbinary trans person who came out later in life, this programming aimed specifically for trans and nonbinary youth is a crucial way to send the message you belong," Weinblatt said. "Even if you are a parent or caregiver, an adult ally or older trans/nonbinary individual, there's a session for you. We want to build community through learning, entertainment, stories and shared experiences. We're all in this together."

With 33 speakers and 29 events already slated for the month of October, spots are sure to fill up quickly. Snag yours now before it's too late!

Times and locations vary. See the event calendar at bit.ly/4dEhdbS.



Pansy Division. Photo: pansydivision.com

See Pansy Division at the Magic Bag

One of rock's first openly gay bands, Pansy Division, is about to bring their trailblazing sound to Ferndale's Magic Bag. The group had a moment in the '90s, drawing fans who came to see their unique blend of commentary mixed with cheeky humor. From those early days and onward, Pansy Division has aimed to subvert the assumption that LGBTQ+ community members couldn't enjoy rock. Lyndsey Parker, editor-in-chief of Yahoo Music, acknowledged that, amid the AIDS crisis, they "almost literally laughed in the face of tragedy with their sophomoric but ultimately unifying and healing humor."

Sept. 28, 7 p.m., *The Magic Bag* (22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale). Buy tickets at pansydivision.com/gigs.



Photo: MiGen

Find Virtual Support with MiGen

Michigan's LGBTQ+ Elders Network, MiGen, is offering virtual support for those unable to visit the organization in person, providing a space for those with geographical or physical limitations to still feel connected with and comfortable in their LGBTQ+ identities. Second Sunday Artist Talk, LGBTQ+ Book Club and Tech Buddy, a digital support system, are among the offerings. Other virtual support offerings include online

meetings with MiGen's community navigator resource coordinator, who can help community members find housing, food and healthcare resources, and MiStory, a monthly LGBTQ+ storytelling group that connects LGBTQ+ elders with younger generations.

Learn more about MiGen's online support options at migenconnect.org/join-us.

We're here for you Greenfield Animal Hospital

Number

(248) 356-1100

Address

21600 W. 11 Mile Rd
Southfield, MI 48076

Email

frontdeskgreenfield@gmail.com

Website

greenfieldanimalhospital.com



FALL AT FORD HOUSE

Story Festival
September 14

Autumn Landscape Guided Tour
Beginning September 24

Harvest Day
October 5

Fall Tea & Tour
October 13

Little Goblins
October 19

Murder Mystery Dinner
October 25



FORD HOUSE
ROSEL & ELEANOR

1100 LAKE SHORE ROAD
GROSSE POINTE SHORES, MI 48236
313-884-4222 | WWW.FORDHOUSE.ORG
Ford House is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit National Historic Landmark



GET TICKETS

5 Michigan Moments From the 2024 DNC We're Still Talking About

The 2024 convention was brimming with queer Great Lakes energy

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

The 2024 Democratic National Convention, held Aug. 19-22 in Chicago, was one for the history books. Not only was the event a national introduction to a presidential ticket that had only been created a few weeks prior, but it was a record-breaking year for LGBTQ+ representation. DNC LGBTQ+ Caucus Chair Earl Fowlkes told the crowd that the event included more than 800 LGBTQ+ delegates, up from 635 in 2020 — the most ever.

The four-day event included countless moments of joy, a decidedly hopeful vibe that stood in stark contrast to the doom-fest that was the Republican National Convention in July, and plenty of reminders about why Michigan is on the map as not only an important swing state, but as a champion for the LGBTQ+ community. Here are five moments from the 2024 DNC we won't soon forget.

1. Dana Nessel blowing the roof off that joint

She stormed the stage in a cobalt blue blazer and took zero prisoners, and that's only part of the reason we can't stop reliving this moment. Michigan's attorney general has always been known for speaking her mind and for living out and proud — despite the clear dangers of doing so in the modern socio-political era. It was only last year when FBI officials reported that the AG had been targeted by a “heavily armed” man, Jack Eugene Carpenter III, who threatened injury and death to Jewish members of the state government.

So it was cathartic — and invigorating — to watch Nessel tear into Republicans who would happily support a return to the days when people like her couldn't legally marry the partners they love. After loving up



The 2024 Democratic National Convention was held in Chicago. Photo: Washington Blade/Michael Key

on Kamala Harris' longtime record of defending marriage equality, Nessel concluded her fiery speech with one of the best lines of the night: “By the way, I've got a message for the Republicans and the justices of the United States Supreme Court: You can pry this wedding band from my cold, dead, gay hand.”

Perhaps this speech was a preview of the attorney general's future gubernatorial run? A girl can dream...

2. Michigan voting during the state roll call

During the ceremonial roll call, each state (and several territories) got a few minutes of camera time to proudly extol the virtues of their

homeland and to informally pledge their votes for the Democratic nominee, with a music intro that tied into the state's vibe. Clearly, all the roll call votes went to Harris — no surprises here — but it was a charming look at the enthusiasm building nationwide for the Vice President. When Michigan got its turn at the mic, you can bet we were glued to the screen.

Michigan chose “Lose Yourself” by Detroit's own Eminem as its theme song, but we'd like to point out that two other states chose Michigan musicians, including Maryland (“Respect” by Aretha Franklin) and Connecticut (“Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours)” by Stevie Wonder).

“Good evening from the Great Lakes State,” Michigan Democratic Party Chair Lavora Barnes began. “Michigan has an incredible story.

We put the world on wheels and we built the middle class.” Sen. Debbie Stabenow continued, “We are getting things done in Michigan. In 2022, we flipped our State House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. We are getting it done in Michigan!” Gov. Gretchen Whitmer added, “We cut taxes. We protected freedoms. We brought manufacturing home, and we know how to win!”

Barnes, Stabenow and Whitmer joined together to cast the state's votes. “Michigan casts three present, 125 votes for our next president, Kamala Harris!” the three said (mostly) in unison.

3. Gov. Whitmer giving a peek at her future presidential run

It's a given, right? There's no way this woman isn't running one day, and when she does, you can bet we'll be hanging on every word, especially if this very presidential-candidate speech is an indication of what that ride is going to be like.

In classic Whitmer style, “that woman from Michigan” held no punches, going straight for the guy who gave her that moniker (“that man from Mar-a-Lago,” she called former President Donald Trump) while maintaining her 100-watt smile and leaning into her trademark Michigan accent. Everyday people, she reminded the audience, are a world apart from Trump. Whitmer stressed that he doesn't understand Americans who have “lived a life like ours.” “You think he's ever had

See **DNC**, page 18

A Community Mourns Detroit Artist Justin Alesna After His Unexpected Death at 36

Friends, artistic collaborators say he lit up the stage, but also their lives

BY JORDYN BRADLEY

Justin Alesna will be remembered as “one of the funniest divas in Detroit” by friend and creative colleague Baddie Brooks.

“He always had something funny and iconic to say. Justin lit up every single room he entered,” Brooks tells BTL.

Alesna’s sister, Jasmine, shared the news of his unexpected death on social media on Aug. 20, writing, “Hello everyone. It is with a heavy heart that I have to report my brother, Justin Alesna, has been found. He is no longer with us.”

Alesna was 36 when he died.

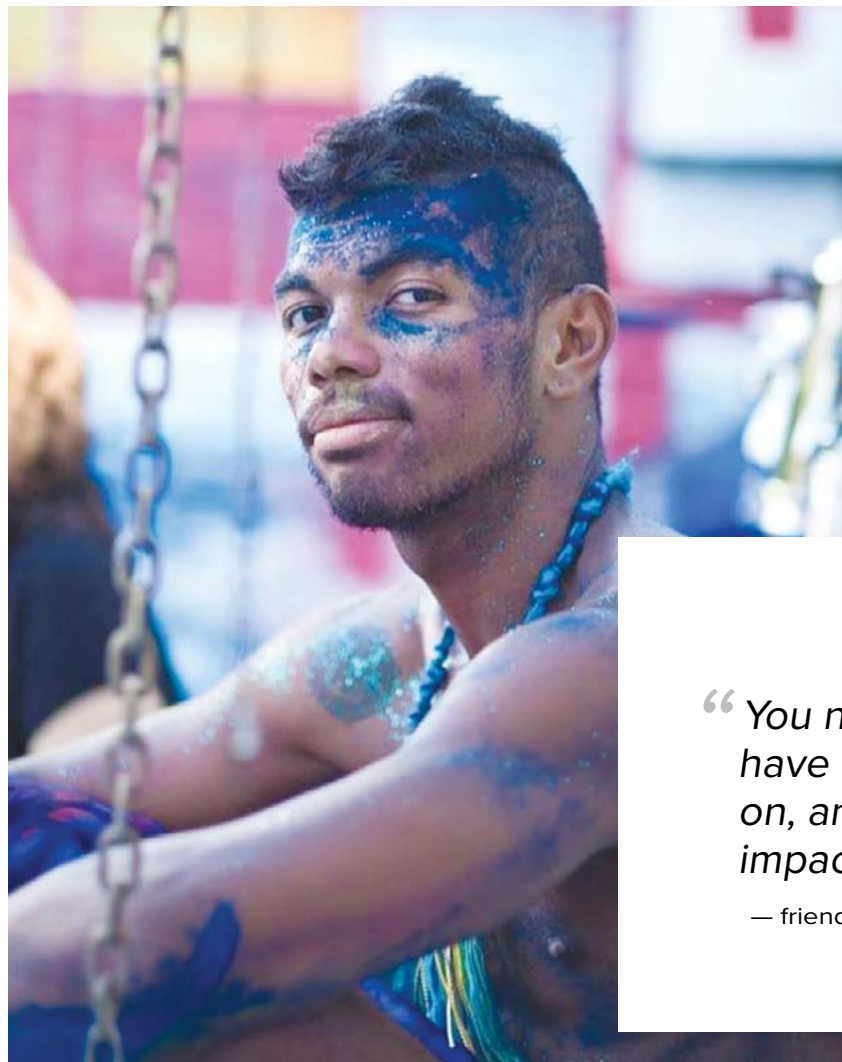
Since then, countless people have posted their own tributes to him online. Many discuss his talent. But nearly all mention how much his heart will be missed.

“What is helping me in this time is just realizing how many people love Justin,” Brooks says.

Throughout his native Detroit, Alesna was known as a creative force. Whether it was choreographing and performing in music videos, theater productions or personal projects, friends say that everything he did was done with passion.

Brooks worked closely with Alesna, requesting his artistic collaboration on a few projects. One of those was the music video for her song, “Nails.” She says Alesna, who appears in the video, came up with the intro. He’s featured saying, “It contains dancing, having fun and good-ass acrylics.” He also performed as a backup dancer for her Ann Arbor set on Aug. 3.

Brooks says they bonded over makeup, wigs, dancing and sometimes even Coney dogs.



Justin Alesna. Photo: Facebook/Screen Dance International

“It was something as simple as enjoying Coney Island together,” she said, reminiscing about one of her last memories with her friend.

Brooks and Alesna also had a running joke that they were “creatively married.” One of the last times he tried to contact her, she missed his phone call.

“But he left me this funny voicemail saying, ‘You need to answer your husband!’ We’d always joke around about that,”

she says.

“He had the capability to put a smile on anyone’s face.”

Kiley James says Alesna was a “huge fashionista” and “the kind of person you wanted to get to know.”

The two worked together at the gay nightclub Menjo’s in Detroit over 10 years ago. James, a DJ, says Alesna would come support him at different venues.

“That has meant a lot to

me,” says James. “He went out of his way to support local artists and performers and was always community-oriented, especially in Metro Detroit and with the queer community.”

Alesna was slated to portray Angel in an upcoming production of “Rent” by Stagecrafters. In a memorial post on their Facebook page, the community theater group reflected on what Alesna was like both onstage and off: “Justin brought

open heart, his amazing goofy humor, his wisdom, his unwavering love and so much more,” reads the caption.

“It feels unreal to believe he is gone.”

While his loved ones are left to recount their memories amid their grief, many say leaning on their shared community is what is helping.

“You never know who you have an effect or impact on, and I know that Justin impacted so many lives,” Brooks says. “Seeing the collective grief that everyone is outpouring, shows that. He was an inspirational dancer, an inspirational actor, an inspirational makeup artist, an inspirational creative, but that wasn’t all that he was. He was a pillar of positivity for the community. And I think that this loss affects all of us.”

Maddie Mae, a friend who was also a backup dancer at the Ann Arbor Pride performance, says Alesna’s influence went far beyond just

“You never know who you have an effect or impact on, and I know that Justin impacted so many lives.”

— friend and collaborator Baddie Brooks

joy everywhere he went. He was a free spirit who made everyone feel loved.

He would walk into a room and the energy would change; it would become much more vibrant and alive with spirit.”

“Now, he is truly our Angel,” the post concluded.

Alesna also helped create the Suttle Dance Company in Detroit, according to a tribute posted on the non-profit’s Instagram.

“He shared his love of dance with us all but also his generous

his creativity.

“He always was warm-hearted and comforting. It didn’t matter who you were, you were greeted with open arms,” Mae says.

When she had to miss a rehearsal, Alesna was quick to help her nail down the choreography and feel comfortable with the routine. She says it was thanks to him she looked good on stage and felt good inside.

“He left an impression on me and everyone he was around,” she recalls.

‘Ruth Would Be Mighty Proud’

As the center that bears her name turns 25, Ruth Ellis’ mission lives on



A group of young adults in front of a mural at Ruth Ellis Center. Photo: Preppy Photography/Ruth Ellis Center

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

When Krystina Edwards was a young resident at Ruth Ellis Center, safe from the dangers of Detroit’s red light district, she felt hope for the first time in a long time. But never would she have imagined the life she’s living now, more than a decade in the future.

Today, Edwards serves as Ruth Ellis Center’s community engagement manager as the organization celebrates its 25th anniversary. It’s a role that sees her giving back every day to the organization that showed it always believed in her — through

the words she needed to hear as a young person and through deeds, big and small, including support that connected her with resources to get her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Western Michigan University.

“Without Ruth Ellis Center, I wouldn’t be the person I am,” Edwards tells BTL. “They opened so many doors for me at a very young age, even when I was known as this ‘unruly child.’ The staff didn’t see that. They saw a girl who had an ability to advocate for others, and they nurtured that by putting me in spaces where I could learn how to advocate for myself and others.”

After Edwards graduated with her master’s of public administration degree, she started a career in Kalamazoo working in various advocacy roles. “And I loved Kalamazoo,” she says, “but when this opportunity came up, it felt like an honor. And now, as part of the development team, I can share my story with people who need to hear it. It’s a full circle story.”

Established in 1999, Ruth Ellis Center has grown from a small drop-in center in Highland Park to a growing non-profit organization that runs four physical locations, including the Clairmount Center, a

44,000 square-foot space opened in Detroit’s Piety Hill neighborhood in 2022 that offers 45 long-term housing units, a health and wellness center staffed by Henry Ford physicians and mental healthcare providers, a fitness center, a technology center, an onsite cafe and several community spaces. Residents can receive gender-affirming hormone therapy, sexual health services, HIV care, primary care and mental health treatments onsite.

Dr. Amorie Robinson, co-founder, clinical psychologist and associate director of outpatient therapy in behavioral health at Ruth Ellis

Center, tells BTL the concept for the organization started with a single child whose story was not unlike Edwards’.

In the late ’90s, a situation was brought to the attention of Robinson and a group of advocates, including John Allen and Courtney Wilson, who were meeting at Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center in Ferndale. “He was 16, a young gay teenager who was being kicked out of his home,” Robinson recalls. “He’d been threatened violently once it

See **Ruth Ellis**, page 14

The Michigan Supreme Court is Chosen by The People, the U.S. Supreme Court is Not

The Michigan Supreme Court is the highest court in the state, making decisions on critical issues that impact everyone. It's important to know the citizens of Michigan have the power to elect the people who are entrusted with this vital role in our state government.

During any given term, issues that come before the Michigan Supreme Court can include civil rights, environmental regulations, criminal justice, reproductive rights, gun safety, fair elections, and more. The justices who serve on the court help shape Michigan's future, reviewing over 2,000 appeals every year and choosing the most complex, significant cases to help ensure a just and fair outcome.

Michigan is one of only 24 states that empowers voters to elect state Supreme Court justices, which is a civic duty as important as any choice you make on your ballot.

This is completely different from United States Supreme Court justices, who are nominated by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Although both the U.S. Supreme Court and the Michigan Supreme Court act as the final authority in interpreting laws and judicial rules at the federal and state level, respectively, there are other differences, too.

Unlike U.S. Supreme Court justices, who serve for life, Michigan Supreme Court justices are elected for eight-year terms. Candidates for the Michigan Supreme Court must be a qualified elector, a licensed Michigan lawyer for five years, and under the age of 70 at the time of their election.

Seven justices serve on the Michigan Supreme Court at a time. When their term is complete, they can run for re-election if they meet the requirements. In 2024, Justice Kyra Harris Bolden is the only incumbent running for re-election. She is the first Black woman to serve on the Michigan Supreme Court, having been appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer in 2022 when a vacancy on the court needed to be filled. That is part of the process in Michigan, and is the only time a Supreme Court justice is appointed and not elected.

Although Justice Bolden may not have been a household name at the time, she previously served in the state House for four years. During her time in the House, Justice Bolden sat on the Judiciary Committee and introduced bipartisan legislation designed to protect citizens' rights. Before that, she was a litigation attorney. These are the kinds of qualifications that ensure that Michigan Supreme Court justices understand the rule of law, the importance of fairness and equity, and demonstrate the level of integrity and education this important role requires.

Supreme Court justices in Michigan must be nominated by a political party, but their political affiliation is not included on voters' ballots. So it's essential to do your homework to understand the values and experience of candidates once they are officially nominated, especially if you want to ensure a balanced court that will protect the rights and freedoms of everyone in Michigan.

This year, Michigan voters will choose who fills two open spots on the Michigan Supreme Court. The votes you cast can make an impact for a generation. That's why it's essential to understand how to vote for Michigan Supreme Court justices.

Even if you vote a straight-party ticket, you must individually cast your vote for justices in the non-partisan section of your ballot. It's easy to find – if you know to be looking for it. So don't stop at the top! Keep going through your entire ballot to vote for two Supreme Court justices in the non-partisan section.

Every election – and every vote – matters. Learn more about your voting rights, get more information about the Michigan Supreme Court, and check out what the non-partisan section of your ballot will look like. Visit www.misupremecourtrocks.com for all this and more.

-Erin Knott, Equality Michigan Executive Director



Paid for by Engage Michigan, 2727 2nd Ave., Detroit, MI 48201

Trump's Claim That Transgender Kids Get Surgeries At School Should Disqualify Him From Office



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Can we all just agree that Donald Trump is the absolute worst?

Haha. I kid. Not about him being the worst. He is trash. But I know that we cannot all agree on this fact.

And that definitely makes me fearful for the future of this country.

I have been trying, for my mental health and well-being, to not breathlessly follow political coverage. I mean, I can't avoid it because I do care deeply about who gets elected and the Republican Party does not share any of my values and morals. Granted, the Republican lurch to the right has accelerated since 2015 when Trump rode down his golden escalator, but Republicans have shown consistently since the 1980s that fascism is A-OK with them.

So it is with dismay that I have witnessed how the media has been covering this race between Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. Granted, the coverage was bad before President Joe Biden dropped out, but it has gotten

Trump is a dangerous man. His followers are dangerous people. We already saw how incapable he is at doing the job of President and we've already seen to what lengths his followers will go to keep him in power.

considerably worse. It's pretty clear that the press hates Harris and are doing everything in their power to present Trump as a palatable candidate. The media puts every batshit crazy thing he says through a filter to make it seem reasonable. Harris, on the other hand, has the opposite problem. She'll say something totally fucking reasonable and the press will respond in a way that makes no rational sense.

Take this recent exchange between journalist Dana Bash and Harris on CNN.

Bash asks Harris about Trump's comment that Harris had recently "turned Black," apparently expecting some kind of response to this absolutely racist display on the part of the



disgraced former president.

Harris responded with, "Same old, tired playbook. Next question, please."

In other words, "I am not going to dignify that racist man's bullshit with a response."

Politico then posts a story with the headline, "Harris evades questions about her identity."

Apparently, someone at Politico was like, "Uh, that seems to be a really bad take." And so they pulled down that headline and replaced it with, "Harris sidesteps the spotlight when it comes to her identity."

What in the ever-loving fuck is going on here?

With this display of corporate media foolery rattling around in my brain, I

then saw a TikTok created by journalist Jamelle Bouie about Trump's recent sit down with Moms for Liberty (which would more accurately be called Moms Against Trans Kids) in which Trump displayed a total disconnect with reality.

Bouie plays a clip. "The transgender thing is incredible," Trump says. "Your kid goes to school and comes home a few days later with an operation. The school decides what's going to happen with your child. And many of these child[sic] 15 years later say, 'What the hell happened? Who did this to me?'"

Bouie rightfully calls this "deranged," saying that "it has no relationship to reality whatsoever."

This makes me think of the times Trump has claimed that there are places in the United States where abortion is legal right up to birth at 9 months. Trump says that they just kill the baby right there after it's been born.

That is not true. There is nowhere such a thing is legal. It is pretend.

The same goes for this claim about trans students. First and foremost, if a child goes to school and doesn't come home for "a few days," that would be a really big deal. That is not a thing that happens. I mean, if my kid didn't come home from school, that would be a "call 911" situation.

So the idea that any kid goes off to school without coming home for days and then they come home with an operation to apparently make them transgender is not connected to any reality whatsoever. I mean, I have a kid who needs an Epi-pen and I've had to fill out paperwork signed by his doctor yearly since he was in Kindergarten to ensure that if he has an allergy attack at school, he'll have access to this life-saving intervention. Nobody is doing "operations" on kids at schools.

Bouie goes on to say that Trump is "clearly cognitively impaired" and wonders why this isn't a major news story. After all, Biden's cognitive health was the subject of headlines every five minutes. But now that Biden's out of the race, Trump just gets a pass. He literally can say whatever he wants and it's fine.

But it's not fine. Trump is a dangerous man. His followers are dangerous people. We already saw how incapable he is at doing the job of President and we've already seen to what lengths his followers will go to keep him in power.

I mean, seriously, there is no planet in which a second Trump presidency goes BETTER. We have been warned. By Trump himself. Let's not fuck this up.

THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Ford Backs Away from ‘Polarizing Issues’ — Like Human Rights

.....

A leaked internal memo from late August reveals that Dearborn-based Ford, which employs nearly 200,000 people, plans to reduce its public commentary on “polarizing issues” but will still address them when necessary. This vague language obscures a distinct right turn for a company that has been vocally supportive of the LGBTQ+ community in the past.

The memo says Ford will no longer participate in the Human Rights Campaign’s Corporate Equality Index, which measures corporate policies, practices and benefits pertinent to LGBTQ+ employees. Ford noted, “We are mindful that our employees and customers hold a wide range of beliefs, and

the external and legal environment related to political and social issues continues to evolve.”

Conservative activist and professional Twitter troll Robby Starbuck shared the memo on X, praising it with the comment, “Sanity is coming for corporate America.”

In contrast, HRC President Kelley Robinson criticized Ford’s decision, stating, “Ford Motor Company has abandoned its commitment to hundreds of thousands of employees by yielding to internet trolls and deprioritizing inclusion.” Robinson highlighted Ford’s long history of high ratings on equality indices and warned that this move undermines its responsibility to its employees and communities. She urged consumers to consider Ford’s abandonment of these commitments when making purchasing decisions. HRC also clarified that it continues to evaluate all Fortune 500 companies on equality issues, regardless of their participation in additional surveys.



Ford’s world headquarters in Dearborn. Photo: Creative Commons/Dwight Burdette

Report Reveals Challenges in Government Services for LGBTQ+ Youth

.....

A new report, titled “Safe Havens II: We Must Affirm and Support Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender Diverse Youth in Out-of-Home Systems,” recommends system improvements and updates law and policy protections for transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse (TNGD) and LGBTQ+ youth.

The report reveals that most states lack explicit protections against discrimination and have harmful laws targeting TNGD youth. It calls for a robust response from policymakers to ensure youth are protected and supported in their communities. The report urges integrating the advice of youth with lived experience in policy development to create more inclusive and affirming environments.

“Let youth have a say in their care, in their lives, and in their existence,” urges Emilio, a TNGD youth quoted in the report. Visit childrensrights.org to read the report.



Queer Artist Unveils Detroit Month of Design Exhibit

.....

Quinn Faylor, a Detroit-based queer non-binary multidisciplinary maker, will open an immersive gallery experience, “Super Bloom,” on Sept. 7 at 6 p.m. at Playground Detroit. Open through Oct. 5, the exhibition features intricate 3D sculptures and vibrant, abstract paintings reflecting the Detroit Month of Design theme “Creative Currents.”

Faylor said in a press release that the works “explore the embodiment of queerness and celebrate the extraordinary potential within relationships. The symbolic lap joinery in these sculptures emphasizes balance and trust. These forms represent both personal and collective growth into new spaces.”

The citywide art experience includes wide-ranging exhibits from more than 250 artists. You’ll find traditional gallery exhibits, immersive experiences, workshops where you can create art and opportunities to meet artists. Learn more at detroitmonthofdesign.org.

Status: Your 2024 Voting Plan

.....

Believe it or not, voting begins later this month! Absentee ballots in Michigan can be mailed in starting 40 days before the Nov. 5 election (Sept. 26). That means it’s time to either: register to vote, order your ballot now, make a plan for early voting, which starts on Oct. 26, or confirm where your Election Day polling place will be this year — some have moved. **Find out everything you need to know at vote411.org.**

Join a Queer Jeep Meet

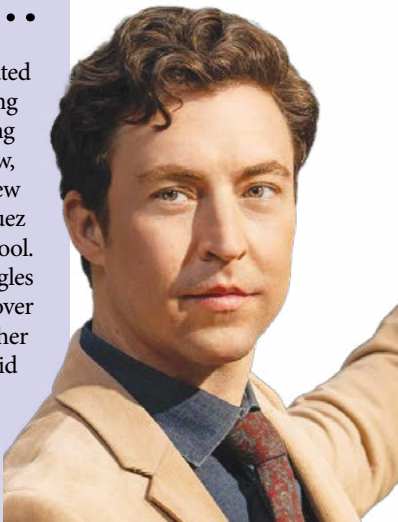
.....

Are you an LGBTQ+ Jeep owner? Have we got an event for you. Head to Adam’s Apple in Warren on Sept. 12 from 6-9 p.m. for the bar’s Rainbow Jeep Sheep Karaoke Flock Meet. It’s exactly what it sounds like — Jeeps, karaoke, cash bar, good times. Learn more at facebook.com/adamsapple.mi.

Don’t Miss ‘English Teacher’ on FX

.....

“English Teacher,” a new FX comedy created by Brian Jordan Alvarez, is a refreshing take on the life of a gay man navigating a challenging workplace. The show, which Time called the year’s best new sitcom, follows the adorable Evan Marquez (Alvarez), a teacher at a Texas high school. The first season focuses on Evan’s struggles after a school investigation is launched over a kiss with his boyfriend, fellow teacher Malcolm, complicating his vow to avoid dating other faculty members. Streaming on Hulu.



Brian Jordan Alvarez. Photo: FX

Walk in the (Fabulous) Shoes of Local Queer Trailblazers

Everything you need to know about the Ann Arbor District Library LGBTQ+ walking tour

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Fun, meaningful — and free — fall travel doesn't have to mean trekking far from home. The Ann Arbor District Library invites you to walk in the shoes of the LGBTQ+ forefathers and mothers who paved the way for a Michigan that has never been a more welcoming, safe place for our community. The library's LGBTQ+ Walking Tour will take you on an entertaining, educational journey through greater Ann Arbor with stops at historically significant landmarks and everyday spots that have been a part of local queer history as well as locations where places of significance are now gone but never forgotten.

As you visit each stop, follow the library's guided tour materials, available online at the links below to learn fun facts and little-known historical details. Jacob Gorski, AADL outreach team member, tells BTL that one of the biggest joys of helping to build the walking tour was the opportunity to hear stories from local LGBTQ+ community members, especially about places along the route that no longer exist. "We learned so many fun facts," Gorski says. "One little tidbit I loved learning about Necto is that it was once called the Nectarine Ballroom because the nectarine is the sweetest fruit."

The walking tour is only the latest in a long list of local resources the library has created in honor of the local LGBTQ+ community, including offerings like “The Gayest Generation” podcast, which focuses on local community members sharing stories about early days spent fighting for acceptance and equality, lecture series and author talks with queer creators and important figures, and a long list of Pride Month activities each year. This summer, the library’s “Big Gay Read” featured queer Kalamazoo author Samantha Irby’s book “We Are Never Meeting in Real Life.”

Since the tour is self-guided, you can explore at your leisure — plan to do the route in one day or stop by locations when you're nearby.

1. Human Sexuality Office, University of Michigan

516 E. Liberty St.

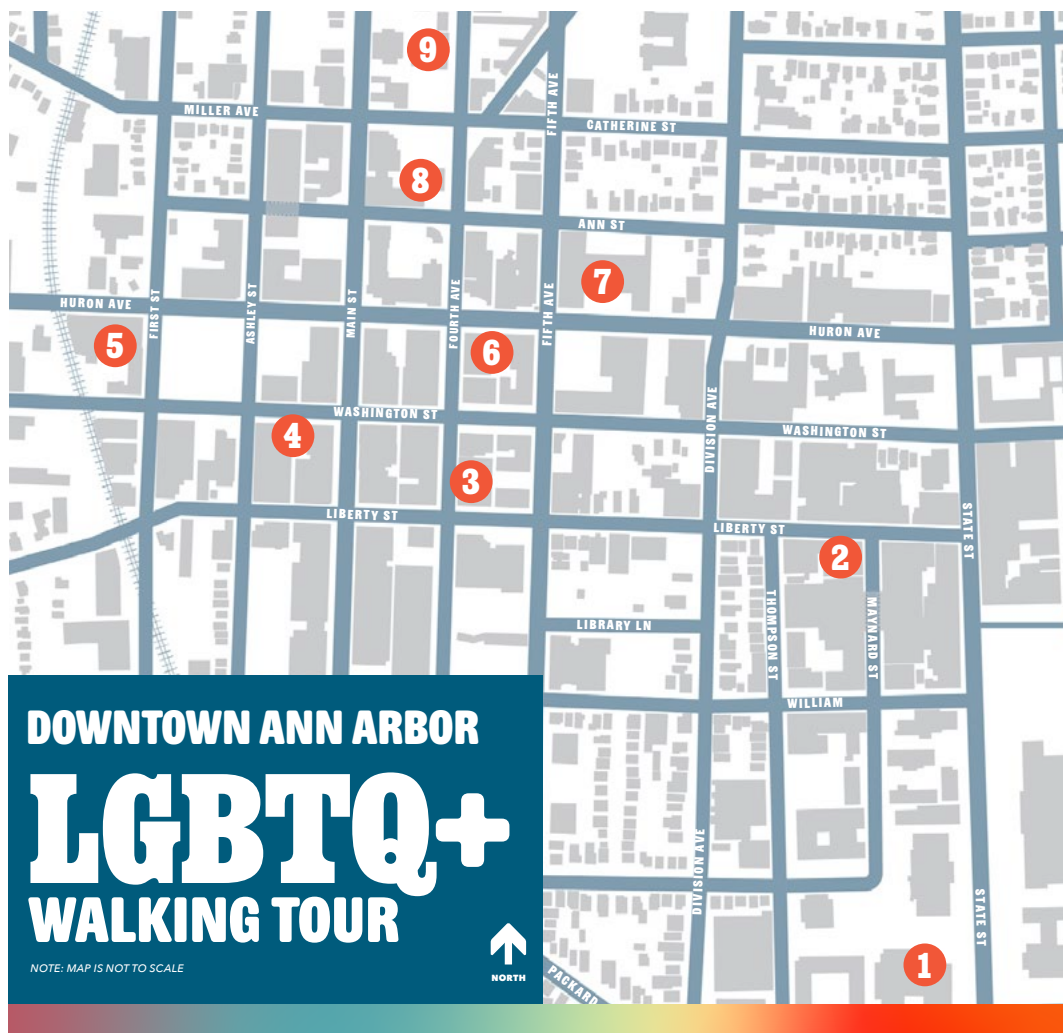
Michigan Union | 530 S. State St.

Today, we know it as Necto. When it opened in 1984, it was The Nectarine Ballroom: a big-city style nightclub with multiple dance floors, celebrity performers, and — at its height — three queer nights a week.

3. Common Language Bookstore

215 S. Fourth Ave.

Founded in 1971, the Human Sexuality Office (now known as Spectrum Center) was the first office of its kind in the United States. Jim Toy and Cynthia Gair were hired as the first employees at the center, which continued to expand its mission over the years to welcome the LGBTQ+ community and advocate for civil rights on campus and beyond.



POINTS OF INTEREST

This walking tour includes locations that were chosen because of their historical importance to the queer community, and their relative proximity to one another. There were several other important locations that were not included, such as the Gay Community Services Center, S3 Safe Sex Store, Canterbury House, Comprehensive Gender Services Program, and many more.

- 1 HUMAN SEXUALITY OFFICE,
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**
325 Michigan Union
530 S. State St.
 - 2 NECTARINE BALLROOM**
516 E. Liberty St.
 - 3 COMMON LANGUAGE
BOOKSTORE**
215 S. Fourth Ave.
 - 4 THE FLAME**
115 W. Washington St.
 - 5 THE RUBAIYAT**
102 S. First St.
 - 6 THE TOWN BAR**
214 E. Huron St.
 - 7 KATHY KOZACHENKO STATUE**
301 E. Huron St.
 - 8 WOMANSPACE**
211½ N. Fourth Ave.
 - 9 BRAUN COURT**
313–327 Braun Ct.

Common Language Bookstore was a feminist, LGBTQ+ bookstore founded in 1990 by Lynden Kelly and Kate Burkhardt. Visitors could drop in to browse the shelves and learn all about LGBTQ+ social life in the city. The bookstore moved to Braun Court from 2003 to 2018.

4. The Flame

115 W. Washington St.

The Flame was a dive bar in the truest sense. From the 1960s through the 1990s, it acted as a refuge for queer people living in and visiting Ann Arbor. It will be remembered for its debauchery and raucousness.

5. The Rubaiyat

102 S. First St.

The Rubaiyat, which first opened in 1960, was a restaurant-turned-disco-club that became THE place for lesbians to meet, dance and socialize in the 1970s and 1980s. It was also known for hosting drag nights and the Miss Ann Arbor pageant.

6. The Town Bar

214 E. Huron St.

The Town Bar was first purchased in 1958 by Norman Goetz, and relocated to 112 W. Washington Street in 1964. Norman and his partner Raymond Devereaux operated the bar together until 1970, when the couple's gay clientele moved right across the street to The Flame.

7. Kathy Kozachenko Statue

Ann Arbor City Hall — 301 E. Huron St.

The walking tour's debut coincides with Ann Arbor's bicentennial celebration, a perfect opportunity to reflect on the city's contributions to several firsts for the queer community. Jerry DeGriek and Nancy

Wechsler were the first politicians to come out while in office in 1972. Two years later, Kathy Kozachenko became the first openly gay person elected to public office in the United States. Plans were announced to build a statue commemorating her as part of the city's bicentennial in 2024.

8. Womanspace

211 ½ N. Fourth Ave.

Step back into the 1970s and up a flight of stairs to imagine a space where members of a lesbian feminist collective published The Leaping Lesbian magazine and ran a small bookstore, art gallery and the Women's Crisis Center. Staffed by volunteers, Womanspace operated between 1975 and 1985.

9. Braun Court

313–327 Braun Ct.

Braun Court, located across from the Farmers Market on N. Fourth Avenue, was a beloved gathering spot for Ann Arbor's LGBTQ+ community. Aut Bar, owned by Keith Orr and Martin Contreras, opened there in 1995 and other small businesses and organizations moved in next door, including Common Language Bookstore, the Jim Toy Community Center and Trillium Real Estate. The courtyard was the site of many impromptu gatherings, including a celebration for the Supreme Court decision overturning Michigan's same-sex marriage ban on June 26, 2015, and a memorial for the Pulse Nightclub shooting a year later.

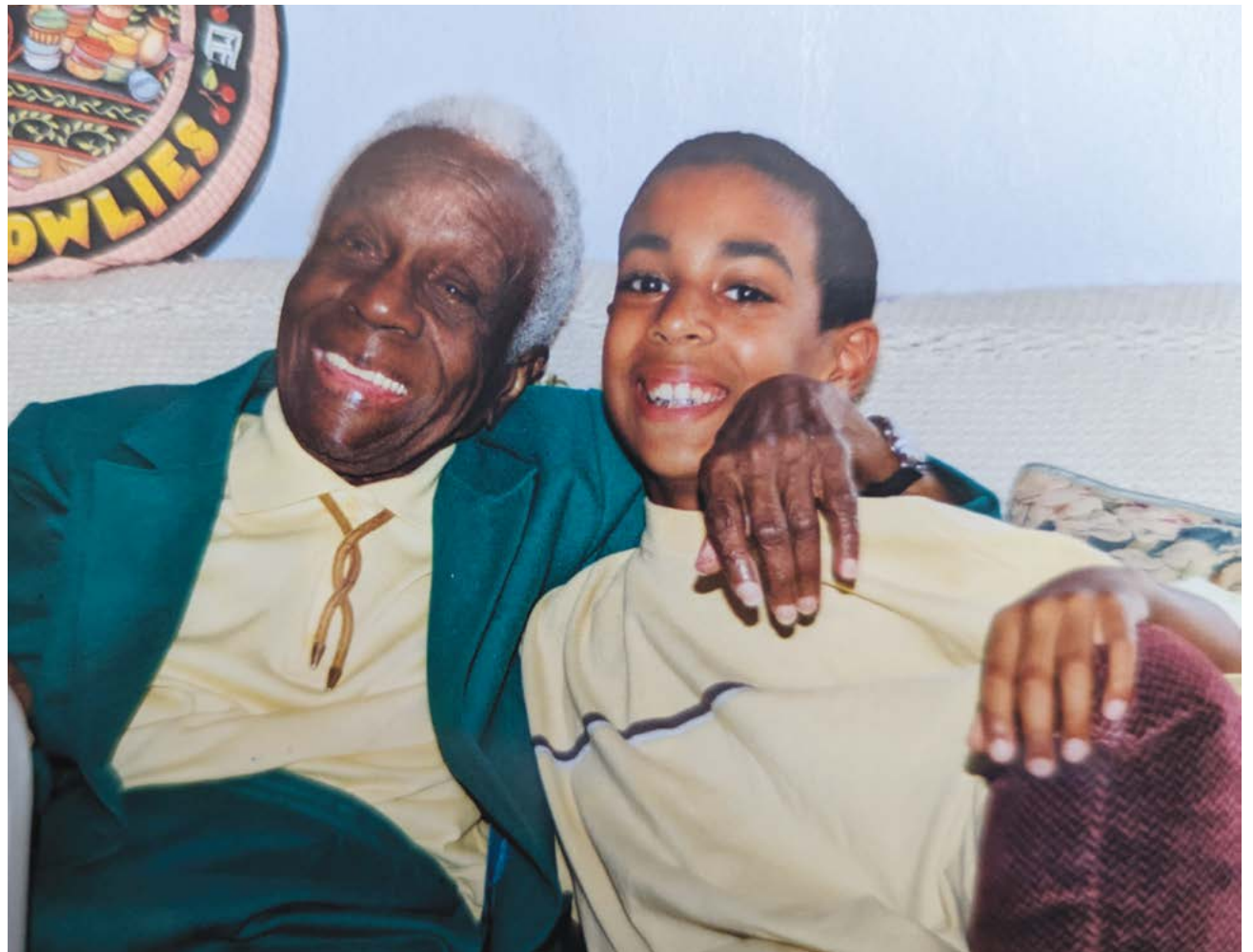
- Aut Bar, 315 Braun Ct.
- Jim Toy Community Center, 319 Braun Ct.
- Common Language Bookstore, 317 Braun Ct.
- Trillium Real Estate, 323 Braun Ct.

Download a detailed PDF guide at bit.ly/3T9DGFz.

DOWNTOWN ANN ARBOR

LGBTQ+
WALKING TOUR

Scan the QR code to download the map and learn more about the places featured on the tour



(Clockwise, from top) Wanda Sykes during a visit to the Ruth Ellis Center. Ruth Ellis embraces a young kid. Lily Tomlin headlines an event for the center alongside Bruce Vilanch and Coco Peru. Photos: Ruth Ellis Center and Jason A. Michael

◀ Ruth Ellis

Continued from page 8

was discovered or disclosed that he was gay, and we rallied around this problem because he didn't have a place to stay and certainly wasn't feeling safe at home or within his own family. We all found this very tragic, and we felt compelled to do something about it."

Robinson and the other volunteers ensured the teen had a place to stay, which sometimes included the home she shared with her partner at the time. After this experience, a core group of these advocates launched the simple, powerful initiative that would become Ruth Ellis Center: "Support youth and keep them safe."

Coming up with the name was simple, Robinson says. The Center's namesake, Ruth Ellis, was born in 1899 and came out as lesbian in 1915. By the 1940s, Ellis was providing shelter, physical support and spiritual affirmation to young LGBTQ+ community members in the Detroit area who had been rejected by their families.

"I thought about Ruth Ellis, who was my friend, mentor and somewhat of a grandmother figure

of mine back then," Robinson explains. "She had given refuge to young people in the community, particularly African Americans who were seeking support, affirmation and safety." Ellis gave her blessing and was there to cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Ruth Ellis Center in 2000, at age 101.

"It was on the second floor, right after her 101st birthday, which, by the way, she danced at," Robinson recalls. "That's a testimony to how physically healthy she was at the time. A co-founder offered to escort her up the steps but she said, 'That's OK, I'll do it myself,' and she did. We celebrated together, and she knew that this would be a place that would save the lives of many youngsters in Southeastern Michigan who are suffering from the pain and rejection by their own families. And thus was born the Ruth Ellis Center."

A month later, Ellis died. "But she left in peace, knowing that this thing, whatever it was, was going to happen," Robinson says. "We had her blessing and we've always known her spirit is with us. Those first board meetings, all of a sudden, the lights might flicker and we'd tell each other, 'That's Ruth, saying 'Y'all make a decision!'"

The board made many decisions, always with the needs of its young adult community in mind. Chief among those needs, true to Ellis' personal mission: safety and affirmation.

Edwards recalls early days visiting the drop-in center, where she and other girls from the red light district would stop by for a hot meal, fresh clothes or just to be together somewhere calm and safe. "It was this family environment I didn't have other places — none of us did. We were all on the streets, doing the same thing with no one in our corner," she recalls. "And so it was a pleasure to hang out there. You knew you were gonna be greeted by smiling faces and probably even learn something. That was always just a great time, and important for me, as a person who grew up homeless and with a mother who was a drug addict. We bounced around a lot."

Dropping into the Ruth Ellis Center put Edwards on the organization's radar, and when a spot opened for a child in foster care — Edwards was a ward of the state by her mid-teens — staffers went looking for her. At the time, Edwards was without a cell phone and had recently quit the all-boys high school

assigned to her by the state. Her next option was being sent to a boys' home. "Imagine them sending me to a boys' home," Edwards muses. "After I've been on hormones, after I've been living my life as a woman, as a girl, for the past three or four years. To think they were going to literally force me into a boys' home was terrifying. I couldn't do it. I ran and never looked back."

By the time Ruth Ellis Center staff caught up with Edwards, she had been on the run for months. Edwards explained that she had been running to avoid the boys' home. "And the next thing I knew, we got into a car. It was raining all day, but when we got to Ruth's House, it's as if the gods had opened up the sky. I kid you not, the sun was shining right over this random house we pulled in front of and there was no more rain," Edwards recalls. "And then I walked in and was introduced to the house manager. I was taken to my room and my roommate and I literally was in a house."

Edwards says that at Ruth's House, one of Ruth Ellis Center's residential facilities, she honed her cooking skills and learned how to do laundry and other basic tasks, but that the most impactful experience was learning

how to take care of her mental health. Ruth Ellis Center connected her with mental health providers and helped her finish high school. It was also where she found a stable, supportive chosen family — a family that piled into cars to support her at her grandfather's funeral. Small, impactful moments that "made me really know I was loved and cared about," Edwards says.

Over time, Edwards was even able to forge new relationships with her parents thanks to the efforts of Ruth Ellis caseworkers. "My dad was never really in my life much during my childhood, but as I got a little older and after he came to [Ruth Ellis Center support] groups with me, he became one of my biggest supporters," she says.

Ruth Ellis Center Executive Director Mark Erwin notes that there are still only a handful of organizations that prioritize and center the foundational needs of young people first. "A huge focus for Ruth Ellis Center historically has been access to those basic safety net services and housing resources," he explains. "That's really how we began

See **Ruth Ellis**, page 16

Michigan LGBTQ+ Leaders Push Back After Former State GOP Chair Uses Gay Slur

Rep. Jason Morgan: ‘Republicans are dangerous to gay people.’

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

When out gay Rep. Jason Morgan, vice chair of the Michigan Democratic Party, read what former co-chair of the Michigan GOP Meshawn Maddock posted about him on X, he was shocked, to a point. But then again, Maddock's language seems par for the course for a party that has built a campaign around othering and dehumanization. So far, the state Republican party has shown no sign of denouncing Maddock's hate speech.

The failed fake elector took to X last week to post a bit of public discourse, which has since been flagged with the warning, “Visibility limited: this Post may violate X's

rules against Hateful Conduct.” The post was a retweet of a photo Morgan took on the DNC floor featuring Michigan attendees. Maddock added at the top, “Fags and Hags.”

You know it's bad when even the X algorithm takes a step back. Why this felt necessary is anyone's guess, but Maddock's post, Morgan says, stands in strong contrast to the inclusive message central to the Harris-Walz campaign.

“As I've been thinking this through the last couple of days,” Morgan tells BTL, “I really keep coming back to kind of one central point for myself, and that's that I ran for office to fight bullies like Meshawn Maddock and Donald Trump, and I won't rest until we defeat them.”

“It's such a direct contrast between the two parties,” he adds. “One party is empowering and lifting up the LGBTQ+ community, and the other is calling us homophobic slurs from the '90s. You can't make a starker contrast than what I've seen in the past week.”

That contrast includes a Democratic convention that saw a record-breaking number of LGBTQ+ attendees on the convention floor. DNC LGBTQ Caucus Chair Earl Fowlkes addressed the crowd on the second night of the big event and drew attention to the more than 800 LGBTQ+ delegates, up from 635 in 2020. Other national LGBTQ+ figures in attendance included Harris-Walz National LGBTQ+ Engagement Director Sam Alleman

and senior advisor to Vice President Harris Sergio Gonzales, alongside dozens of leading state figures like Michigan's own Sen. Jeremy Moss, Rep. Jason Hoskins, Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter and many others.

“When I saw the tweet, yes, I was shocked, but then I remembered that this is what the Republican party has shown us time and time again under Donald Trump. It's what they stand for,” Morgan says. “There's this idea among some gay Republicans that they will be OK under another Trump presidency, and this is just a shining example that they are wrong.”

Morgan responded to Maddock's post with a pointed post of his own, writing, “Former @MIGOP Chair and advisor to Trump's 2024

campaign, just called me a f*g. As a proud gay man who loves his husband, these hateful taunts don't undermine my Pride, but to countless LGBTQ young people across the USA, hateful rhetoric can lead to depression and suicide.”

“Donald Trump and Republicans are dangerous to gay people, and if anyone fails to see that, then they are just naive and choosing not to believe what we've been shown time and time again. And that's the frustrating thing to me,” he says.

Morgan says there are LGBTQ+ voters who plan to vote for Trump or to abstain. “But the reality is that as gay people, our basic rights, our dignity and our safety from harm

See **Maddock**, page 18



Get the care you need, when you need it, with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network. From the largest network of doctors and hospitals in Michigan to coverage for mental health, healthy recipes, free resources to keep you healthy and more, Blue Cross is always ready to help.

Learn more at
MIBluesPerspectives.com/ReadyToHelp

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

IIC

ITALIAN
INTERIOR
CONCEPTS

Shop In Italy, ON US

Don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to explore the pinnacle of Italian luxury furniture and interior brands, courtesy of Italian Interior Concepts.

28096 WOODWARD AVENUE
ROYAL OAK, MI, 48067
(248) 648-1515
Sales@Italianinteriorconcepts.com

Learn More Here



◀ Ruth Ellis

Continued from page 14

— just a safe space to access things like food and clothing and, over the years, we've [been] adding housing programs and things like integrated health services."

Health service access has been critical in the Detroit region. In 2013, Erwin says, the city represented around 9% of the state's population but around three-quarters of all new HIV infections, predominantly impacting 13 to 19-year-old Black gay men and Black trans women. Today, residents at facilities like the Ruth Ellis Clairmount Center can access health and wellness resources on site. These initiatives are a direct result of the Center responding to the needs of young people based on what they are sharing, Erwin says.

"It's anything from just having a cold and needing some cold medicine to HIV prevention and chronic disease management," he adds. "That can happen right there in that space and from there, they can maybe head to a therapy workshop and then upstairs is your apartment. The idea is eliminating as many barriers as possible for these young people."

"It's another example of how Ruth Ellis Center is here responding to the needs of young people based on what they are sharing with us, not based on what we think is best for them," Erwin adds.

Edwards says one of the key elements of how Ruth Ellis Center reaches young people is by remembering that they are, in fact, young people. She remembers getting in a little trouble with her friend Roxy, who lived nearby. "I was a little defiant," she recalls. "Roxy and I would occasionally sneak out — we were like any teenagers, just hanging out, listening to music, playing video games, but I'd get caught sneaking back in after curfew." Staffers doled out consequences, but "I was never ridiculed or persecuted for it," she says. "They'd say, 'We know you're a teenager and you're going to do teenage things, but your safety is what we're concerned about. We don't want nothing to happen to Krystina.' I'd lose little privileges, but I still had my family."

Ruth Ellis Center Director of Development and Advancement Nazarina Mwakasege says she's constantly amazed and inspired by residents and

program participants. When a young adult recently told her, "You really are in this with us and for us," she says it was a moment that reminded her why she serves in this role. "It reaffirms my work and the experiences I've had," she explains. "I think [we] do this in service, in part, to the small pieces and even the larger pieces of ourselves that can so closely identify with these young people in the experiences they've had as being part of the community."

Mwakasege says she's often inspired by simply being immersed in Ruth Ellis Center's physical spaces. "It's difficult not to be driven by a space where, when you go into the bathroom and do something as simple as wash your hands, Beyoncé

overwhelmed with joy that we have a steady board, a growing staff and four locations that are saving lives." Robinson, aka Kofi Afua Adoma, is the namesake of one of those locations. Kofi House centers on the needs of lesbians and queer women and girls.

"There really shouldn't be a Ruth Ellis Center," Robinson adds. "There shouldn't be a need for this in the world. These youth should be able to live out their lives and be all of who they are in the world and be treated like everyone else. Ruth believed in equality and she believed that God loves everybody. She would be outraged if she were still around, to see how some religious people are against LGBTQ+ people. But I know her spirit



A group of people practicing yoga at the Kofi House, which centers on the needs of lesbians and queer women and girls. Photo: Ruth Ellis Center

lyrics adorn the mirrors," she says. "There's so much acknowledgement of the community that we serve and with whom we work and even the space that we occupy right in our offices in Highland Park and other historically Black city spaces."

"Ruth would be mighty proud of the cofounders and the pioneers, and she would be so proud of the young people," Robinson says. "The ones finding ways to survive and to authentically be themselves in the world as challenging and dangerous as it is, especially in a climate like this."

"She is still with us in spirit," Robinson says. "She's looking over us and she would not have even dreamed of having four different sites throughout Detroit and Highland Park. She wouldn't even conceive of how much we've grown, from a small drop-in center to having all these different comprehensive services."

"Ruth's mind would have been blown," Robinson says. "She would have been

is watching over these young people. She wants them to be safe and loved and affirmed. She wants them to be cared for and to see that they get the services they need."

Looking ahead

As Erwin considers the next phase of Ruth Ellis Center's evolution, he acknowledges that some of the barriers present in 1999 still exist today. "We're still navigating some of these very real challenges in terms of how these systems like child welfare, healthcare and housing are not set up to support LGBTQ+ young people," he says. "So it is as much of our responsibility to support these young people as it is to support these systems in understanding how they can evolve to better support and better prioritize these young people who are so disproportionately affected by homelessness and so overly represented

in child welfare.”

One way Ruth Ellis Center advances systemic change is through its Ruth Ellis Institute, which provides training and consulting for human service organizations and care systems. Institute team members work with professionals who administer various services to young adults, educating them on topics that fall under the “SOGIE” (sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression) umbrella.

Jessie Fullenkamp, director of the Ruth Ellis Institute, says a typical day might include educating a child welfare case manager on the definition of nonbinary or working on a training program for foster care agencies. The Institute recently contracted with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to train every CPS foster care and adoption case manager in the state of Michigan.

“The goal is that they really understand the importance of listening to young people and deferring to the language they’re using so that there’s an attitude and behavioral shift,” Fullenkamp says. It’s not always an easy process — in fact, she says, some organizations or individuals who are mandated to receive training through the Institute are quite resistant.

Fullenkamp says it’s critical to have reasonable goals in mind. Progress that happens in inches, not feet, is still progress. “We’re not trying to change someone who is offended by even talking about pronouns,” she acknowledges. “They’re probably not going to decide to hang a rainbow flag in their cubicle, right? That’s probably not realistic. But what we



The Ruth Ellis Center has supported youth since 1999. Photo: Ruth Ellis Center

can do and where we have seen an ability to really make a big shift is when our goal is not to change a person’s mind, but to help a person feel understood.”

“Often, something shifts within them that allows them to be open to hearing about the behavior that is being asked of them on the job,” she adds. “But when you have a goal of changing someone’s mind about something, the assumption is that you’re the only person who knows the right way. Instead, we really see everyone as having a piece of the truth, even if the way they articulate it is different than how we do. If we see goodness in them and invite understanding, that’s often something people are not being offered in their workplace — or in life.”

In the end, Fullenkamp says her team tries to model the behavior they are asking them to exhibit with LGBTQ+ young people, adding, “We’re seeing real progress.”

“The young people we serve are some

of the most creative, resilient and talented young people I’ve ever met. The focus should always be on how we can provide resources so that they can achieve all they want to achieve in their life — that’s what it’s about,” Erwin says. “It’s not this hyper focus on the circumstances which brought them to Ruth Ellis Center. It’s recognizing that these are incredible young people who have every right to dream of a future that is entirely theirs, just as every other young person should do.”

Ruth Ellis Center will celebrate its 25th anniversary at a gala on Sept. 26 at The Colony Club in Detroit. The VOICES! event will feature a silent auction, an open bar, a formal dinner, special guests and live performances. Reach out to director@ruthelliscenter.org for information about sponsorship opportunities. Find tickets and details at bit.ly/3z5orGW.

Serving the Real Estate Needs of Michigan's LGBT Community for 30 Years!

Lynn Stange & Eli Moran

Full Service Realtors
Buyer's & Seller's Agents
70 W. Long Lake Rd., Troy, MI 48098

"There really is a difference!"

Eli Moran
(586) 291-1432
eli.dobek.reo@gmail.com

Lynn Stange
(248) 561-6967
LLStange.aol.com

Meet Our Doctor

We're proud to have a dedicated and skilled team that's passionately committed to ensuring your dental well-being.

Dr. Darren Schweyemaier
Dentist

New Patients Welcome!

248-669-3434

Community Dental of Walled Lake
2340 S Commerce Road
Walled Lake, MI 48390

schweysmiles.com

The Center for Relationship Health

Founder and Director Dr. Joe Kort

JOIN CRSH'S

QUEER MEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

Individual, Group and Couples Therapy

www.crsh.com | 248-399-7447
25600 Woodward Ave., Suite 215, Royal Oak
First Wednesday & Third Friday of Every Month

Group run by:
Gregg Johnson, LMSW
Steven Taylor, LMSW

Scan for more info
or go to crsh.com

A	B	A	B	A	O	M	A	R	S	T	A	R
N	O	S	E	S	P	E	S	O	T	H	R	U
T	A	I	N	T	T	A	T	U	R	E	I	N
I	T	F	E	E	L	S	S	O	G	O	O	D
			F	R	A			R	H	U	B	A
S	A	I	N	G	I	T			R	E	B	E
I	L	E	T				T	O	L	L	S	A
R	K	O		T	I	E	D	Y	E		A	R
I	A	M	A	S	T	R	O	N	G	B	L	A
C	L	A	R	K	E			N	O	L	L	
A	I	N	T		M	A	P			E	S	E
					L	E	S	B	I	A	N	W
A	N	G	E	L		F	A	D	E		R	A
D	R	E	S	S		A	N	D	S		T	I
S	A	L	S	A		B	O	S	S		S	L

All the Way Out Puzzle Solution
Puzzle can be found on page 29

to take items out of the cart before checking out?” she asked the crowd. “Hell, you think he’s ever *been* to a grocery store? That’s what the chauffeur is for,” she said.

“Kamala Harris has lived a life like ours, she knows us,” Whitmer said. “Donald Trump doesn’t know you at all. You think he understands that when your car breaks down you can’t get to work? No. His first word was probably chauffeur.” In contrast, Whitmer said, like many regular Americans, Harris served as a caretaker for her mother as she was dying from cancer.

4. Catching glimpses of queer Michigan attendees

The next best thing to being there ourselves was watching live coverage and social media posts for the occasional peek at attendees like Michigan Democratic Party Vice Chair Rep. Jason Morgan, Michigan Sen. Jeremy Moss, Rep. Jason Hoskins, Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter, Attorney General Nessel and wife Alanna Maguire, and other out LGBTQ+ Michiganders who made the trip to Chicago.

We were living vicariously through their experiences, whether it was fun behind-the-scenes posts like Moss tweeting “Breakfast with the Buttigiegs” with a shot of a sleepy-eyed Chasten or Rep. Jason



(Left) Gov. Gretchen Whitmer tears into Trump during her speech at the DNC. (Right) U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg speaks at the LGBTQ+ Victory at the DNC event at the WIT in Chicago on Aug. 20. Photos: Michael Key/Washington Blade

Hoskins’ Instagram photo gallery straight from the DNC floor.

Thank you, Michigan attendees!

5. Chanting ‘Pete, Pete, Pete’ for days

There was a brief moment after President Biden announced he was no longer running for reelection and presumptive nominee Harris was making her running mate choice when all eyes were on Michigan’s favorite gay dad, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. The Traverse City resident had an impressive run on the Sunday political talk shows, battling down typical Fox News inanity with a deftness not seen since the early days of the first Obama campaign with the calm, focused demeanor of the kind of leader we need in 2024. He’s the adult in the room who

makes you feel like everything is going to be OK if we can just move past the stupid culture wars and distractions.

While it was no surprise that Pete’s DNC speech delivered on those same vibes, it was a welcome moment we won’t soon forget. Buttigieg focused his remarks on joy and hope and on his personal journey, after opening with a line that was met with thunderous applause: “I’m Pete Buttigieg, and you might recognize me from Fox News.”

“The makeup of my kitchen table, the existence of my family is just one example of something that was literally impossible as recently as 25 years ago when an anxious teenager growing up in Indiana wondered if he would ever find belonging in this world,” he said in the speech, adding, “I don’t presume to know what goes on in your kitchen, but I know as sure as I am standing here



that everything in it, the bills you pay, the shape of the family that sits there, the fears and the dreams that you talk about late into the night compel us to demand more from our politics than a rerun of some TV wrestling death match.”

“Choosing a guy like JD Vance to be America’s next vice president sends a message, all right: doubling down on negativity and grievance. A concept of campaigning best summed up in one word: darkness. That’s what they are selling. But I just don’t think America today is in the market for darkness,” he said.

Buttigieg referenced a 2021 Vance speech, where the senator and Trump running mate claimed that people without children have “no physical commitment to the future of this country.” “When I deployed to Afghanistan, I didn’t have kids then; many of the men and women who went outside the wire with me didn’t have kids

either,” Buttigieg said. “But let me tell you, our commitment to the future of this country was pretty damn physical.”

Buttigieg accused Republicans of casting people of different political viewpoints as enemies. Instead, he said, politics can be “empowering and uplifting.”

“I believe in a better politics, one that finds us at our most decent, and open, and brave,” he said. “This November we get to choose. We get to choose our president, we get to choose our policies, but most of all, we will choose a better politics, a politics that calls us to our better selves and offers us a better every day,” he said. “That is what Kamala Harris and Tim Walz represent. That is what Democrats represent. That is what awaits us when America decides to end Trump’s politics of darkness once and for all.”

is on the ballot in November,” he adds. “And I hope that people will see that and understand how high the stakes are in this election.”

Trump and his cohorts have made anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment a cornerstone of 2024 Republican campaign efforts, with candidates across the country running on their success in outlawing transgender healthcare in states like Florida, Ohio and Texas. Dismantling anti-discrimination laws, banning books from public schools and

libraries and enacting laws like Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” policy are all emblematic of what today’s GOP stands for. Many political experts warn that the Supreme Court is poised to knock down its 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges decision, which established a federally protected right to marriage for same-sex couples. As ACLU of Michigan attorney Jay Kaplan wrote in an op-ed for BTL, “Emboldened by the decision to strip the right to an abortion from federal law, conservative politicians and activists have turned up the volume on calls for the Court to do the same with marriage equality.”

“Many of these folks who are

empowered by Donald Trump will be in positions of power in government if he is reelected,” Morgan says. “I have some colleagues who are phenomenal Republicans, who I get along with great, who are pushing back and saying ‘This isn’t what the Republican Party stands for,’ but I see no repudiation from the Michigan Party Chair or Donald Trump to these comments by Meshawn Maddock and, to me, that says that this really is what the overall Republican Party stands for under Donald Trump. That’s just the reality.”

Maddock’s photo of Michigan DNC attendees included Coulter,

who responded in a post, “It was a special honor to represent Oakland County as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago last week. I left the convention feeling like many of you: optimistic, determined, and yes... joyful. I was greeted home by the former cochair of the Michigan Republican Party and current wife of a county state representative calling me a fag. It was a sober reminder of the hate that courses through the MAGA right and that our fight is far from over.”

Coulter took a defiant stance, adding in a second post, “I’ll never back down to bullies, and I’ll never bow to hate. I am more determined

than ever to embrace the slogan so popular at the convention: ‘We’re Not Going Back!’ Oakland County is moving forward in responsible ways that lift up everyone.”

On Tuesday, Morgan prompted Republican leaders to respond to Maddock’s hateful post, writing, “It’s been three days since I posted @MeshawnMaddock’s words, and we’ve heard no response from the @MIGOP or Donald Trump. I want to know, @realDonaldTrump, do you condemn this use of homophobic slurs by your supporters? Or does Meshawn truly reflect your values?”

So far, the non-answer seems to be a quiet, but resounding, “Yes, she does.”



Inclusive Workplace Series

Guidance for growing companies in the greater Ann Arbor Region



Learn more and register for upcoming events

a2spark.org/iws

MERITHOT

**CREATE
SOMETHING
EXTRAORDINARY.**

Merithot helps awesome companies create remarkable brands, strategies, websites and content.

Creative Marketing made with ♥ from Ann Arbor, MI

www.merithot.com



How a ‘Ring of Keys’ and a boat ride across Lake Michigan opened up my whole world

BY KELLI DUNHAM

Back in the days when folks were significantly more (ahem) flexible in their understanding of the supervision needs of children, my mom deposited my cell-phone-less 12-year-old self and my 13-year-old sister on the Manitowoc side of the SS Badger car ferry. She handed us some snacks, told us to pretend we had an adult with us and snuck off the boat. She had arranged for

our oldest (and adult) brother to pick us up on the opposite side in Ludington after the four-hour trip.

The trip could have been just another potentially reportable to the authorities but ultimately harmless activity that so defined Gen X childhood, but it became notable for me for another reason. The SS Badger was where I experienced my first Ring of Keys moment.

If you’re unfamiliar, “Ring of

Keys” is a reference to a song in the musical adaptation of Alison Bechdel’s book “Fun Home,” where the main character, as a tween, has a moment of self-recognition when she sees a butch woman making a delivery to a local café. One of the physical indicators was her “ring of keys.”

I can’t recall whether the SS Badger staff member carried a large keyring (it does seem likely), but she caught my attention because she balanced a cup of

coffee in one hand and, as she went to sit down, deftly kicked her toe up to reverse the chair so she could sit on it backward. I had never once seen an adult woman sit on a chair backward. I had seen Fonzi do it on “Happy Days.” But whenever I approached seating this way, an adult would very quickly admonish me with, “That’s not ladylike.” Ladylikeness (ladylikeness?) was never a goal for me, but another feature of Gen X childhood is you didn’t argue

with adults unless you felt like getting popped.

In that moment, other people might have seen a ferryboat employee taking a break. I saw physical poetry, something akin to ballet. And I saw myself.

I spent the rest of the journey peeking around corners and down the stairways of the SS Badger, attempting to emulate my favorite

See **Ferry**, page 22

DOWNTOWN'S WEEKLY QUEER NIGHT

BOOZE
COFFEE
PATIO
SNACKS
DJS

TUESDAYS 10PM-2AM
MENTION BTL FOR \$5 OFF



**SPEAKER
BOX**

200 GRAND RIVER DETROIT
OPEN EVERYDAY 9AM-2AM

mystery book sleuths (always the Hardy Boys, never Nancy Drew), secretly spying on her as she completed her duties.

“Secretly” might be overstating it a bit. I don’t know how discreet I could have been in my tomboy uniform (orange football shirt, older brother’s hand-me-down baseball cap always worn backward, never forward, and vividly patched bell-bottom jeans), scurrying from deck to deck. I probably looked like the slightly unhinged, bright-with-discovery, completely unaccompanied baby queer I was.

Defying all odds and perhaps usual expectations of nautical safety (note: This is a joke. The Badger is inspected before every voyage and is made of iron. The Badger will be here when we are all gone.), the SS Badger still runs back and forth across Lake Michigan. So this summer, when I visited the Midwest, I jumped at the chance to make the Badger again a part of my physical (and not just metaphorical) journey.

Boarding in Ludington, I found, to my surprise, that The Badger remains essentially unchanged. I was marveling at the unaltered signage when a red-shirted member of the Friendliest

San Francisco streetcars. This means that, as a middle-aged queer who has returned time and again to what was once the City of Our People, I’ve now ridden both moving National Landmarks, thank you very much — multiple times.

Of course, there have been some changes. I don’t recall a smoking deck in my earlier journeys, probably because, in the 1970s, every deck was potentially a smoking deck. But the new smoking area is located on the highest level and provides the very best view — highly recommended if you’re into, you know, scenic views — or cigar smoke.

On this latest trip, I looked carefully for any obvious queer couples. On the front deck, I spied two men sitting close together, one reading a book with his legs crossed while the other looked over his shoulder. I guessed that even if they weren’t actually together, they wouldn’t be the type to be offended if a friendly nonbinary writer mistook them for gayfolk.

“How are you all doing?” I asked, hoping to start a conversation.

“We’ll have to see,” one of them replied, “how much this sucks.”

To be quite honest, they did not appear to be having a sucky time. All the same, I did not start a conversation.

There’s certainly more to do these days on the four-hour trip across Lake Michigan than call



If you’re a middle-aged masculine-identifying queer person trying to look serious when taking a photo with a lifeboat? Look again at your hair. And do something about it. Photo: Kelli Dunham

called “a helluva good sport.” Nonironically. He called out Bingo numbers. He made a very G-rated joke about Lady Gaga being a vegetarian. He dealt expertly with the widely ranging levels of interest in his activities.

I bought some popcorn to

queer who has lost touch with their roots.

“Maybe something breakfast-y, like a Bloody Mary,” she said with absolutely no hesitation and then added, “or a beer.”

In her defense, she was working at the ship’s bar. And she did inquire with only the biggest and friendliest of Midwestern smiles.

As I sat in the Badger’s main lounge, enjoying the 9 a.m. bingo game and my extremely fairly priced popcorn and decidedly non-alcoholic drink, I could almost feel 12-year-old me. I remembered myself scurrying, ducking behind the soda machine and peeking around corners.

I felt an urge to comfort my past self (not every part of my childhood was um, stellar, but I’ve had some amazing therapy), but then I realized that memory was imbued with hope, not desperation.

All my family called me a tomboy and said I’d outgrow my love of my brother’s football shirts. But post Badger, I knew that wasn’t necessarily true because I had seen a real-live adult tomboy in the wild.

Since my recent trip, I’ve been inquiring of any Midwestern queer I encounter, “Have you

been on the SS Badger? Back in the day? Or lately?” I am often met with nostalgic smiles.

One older lesbian laughed. “Yeah, I love it! It’s like a time machine!”

And then I smiled. She was speaking more truth than she knew.

Some things never change — the SS Badger is still crossing Lake Michigan, still filled with friendly faces, and still a place where you can see yourself, even if that self is now more likely to be found enjoying a quiet game of bingo rather than a thrilling game of spy.

And maybe that’s the magic of the SS Badger. It’s not just a boat. And if you’re lucky, you might even find yourself again — right there, somewhere between Ludington and Manitowoc.

In the full season, the SS Badger runs two daily trips between Ludington, Michigan, and Manitowoc, Wisconsin. From June 6–Sept. 1, there are two additional overnight trips on the weekends. Book ahead at ssbadger.com. The ferry gets very busy during the peak weeks, especially in August.

“In that moment, other people might have seen a ferryboat employee taking a break. I saw physical poetry, something akin to ballet. And I saw myself.”

Boat Crew in the World explained that this was, in fact, intentional. The SS Badger isn’t just the site of my world-rocking childhood adventure; it’s also a National Historic Landmark. In fact, it’s the only mobile Landmark in the country except for the San

my sister a booger face and play a one-sided game of I Spy. They’ve added a small movie theater, an arcade room with a flat-top Ms. Pac-Man, and even group activities. They had an emcee of sorts, a (again) very friendly kind of guy my dad would have

snack on while I played bingo. As the crew member started to ring up the sale, she reminded me, “You know what goes great with popcorn? A drink.”

“It’s um, 9 a.m.” Even as the words emerged from my mouth, I knew I sounded like a Midwestern

Fight Night

FIVE CANDIDATES. ONE WINNER.
You decide who survives.

WED-SAT,
SEP 25-28
@ 7:30 PM

SAT-SUN,
SEP 28-29
@ 2 PM

POWER CENTER




ums
BE PRESENT.
Together.

FROM THE BELGIAN THEATER TROUPE
ONTROEREND GOED

Directed by **ALEXANDER DEVRIENDT**

On the brink of a presidential election that people on both sides have called the most consequential in history, Belgium's extraordinary Ontroerend Goed offers a fun and thought-provoking examination of free will and politics that puts electronic voting devices — and the candidates' fates — directly into the hands of audience members.

Every performance is different!

Supporting Sponsors: **TOM AND DEBBY MCMULLEN**

Media Partners: **MICHIGAN PUBLIC 91.7 FM, WEDET 101.9 FM,**
and **ANN ARBOR'S 1070NE**

**“WHEN I FIRST WENT TO THE CLINIC,
I HAD NO IDEA I WAS WALKING INTO
A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE.”**

– Bridgette, Vivent Health patient

At **UNIFIED/Vivent Health**, our goal is to help you achieve your health goals. That's why each person who comes through our doors gets a customized team of care and service providers—because your needs are unique, and your care should be too.

UNIFIED
hiv health and beyond

 **viventhealth**

Here for you now and into the future.

Offices in Detroit and Ypsilanti • Office Hours: M-F 9-5

OFFERING

**SOCIAL SERVICES
FOOD PANTRY
TESTING SERVICES
SEXUAL HEALTH HOTLINE**



Scan the QR code
for more information.

If you have questions, please contact us at
UNIFIED@ViventHealth.org or **877-266-1821**

COMING SOON MEDICAL • PHARMACY • BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE



Pelados Beach Hostel owner Reginaldo Telles. Courtesy photo

Sunshine and New (Nude) Friendships

Throw off the chains of clothing servitude and head south for a gay old time

BY ANDRÉ ARAM

Thinking of something a bit more far-flung for your fall travels? Something a little more exotic? A place where you can *really* be yourself, down to every naked pore on your body? The clothing-optional, queer-friendly Pelados Beach Hostel may just be

the perfect respite from the Great White North this year. Think fun, sand and a whole lot of sun-kissed skin.

Brazil is much more than Carnival, Copacabana and the beautiful Iguazu Falls. With a coastline of 4,577 miles bathed on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, the fabulous beaches along its

long coast attract visitors from all over the world. In fact, there are more than 4,000 beaches along Brazil's coastline, eight of which are nudist.

With this niche in mind, Brazilian Reginaldo Telles opened Pelados Beach Hostel three months ago, the first queer-welcoming nudist hostel

in the country. Located in the northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte, in Tibau do Sul, the accommodation is a 10-minute walk from the famous Pipa beach (not yet nudist); however, inside the spacious grounds, male nudity (gay, trans man, bisexual and open-minded straight men) is very welcome.

Asked how he came up with the idea of creating a hostel for the “naked,” Reingaldo told BTL, “Being gay, I wanted to create an environment that combined nudity, freedom — including sexual freedom — artistic

See **Brazil Nudist Hostel**, page 26

How It Really Feels to Be Out and Proud in These Michigan Destinations

Checkin' the vibe from Ferndale to Frankfort with 'That Michigan Guy'

BY LIAM CLYMER

On the cusp of a new adventure, the road sprawls out before you. The last thought on your mind should be safety, but all too frequently, LGBTQ+ community members are plagued by concerns over how folks at a travel destination will perceive them.

Ryan Redoute, known online as That Michigan Guy (in-michigan.com), a social media and travel personality with nearly 150,000 followers on TikTok, sat down with BTL to share his favorite queer-friendly Michigan travel destinations and to discuss the importance of creating queer travel spaces.

Saugatuck

Just three hours from Detroit lies a queer "safe haven," said Redoute. He explained that Saugatuck's long history of providing spaces for the LGBTQ+ community has made it an institution. Today, it attracts more families, but Redoute argued that this has only made it more valuable.

"It really is this place that's super family-friendly, but is also so queer accepting," Redoute said. "I think that a place like that can be just so healing for people, and I think it even was for me mentally, because when you go there, you see that life is just normal, and how you exist is normal, and no one's looking at you weird."

Redoute said this spot is the perfect place for a weekend getaway. Boasting art galleries, Oval Beach, brunch spots and touristy shops (yes, including Michigan fudge) all wrapped up in a small-town feel, Saugatuck offers a classic summer vacation in the purest sense.

That Michigan Guy's Saugatuck Vibe Check: *Saugatuck has been a travel destination for the queer community for decades. My*



Ryan Redoute in Saugatuck. Photo: Ryan Redoute

aunt, who was part of the queer community, would actually visit Saugatuck with her friends back in the '90s. I've gone there with friends, my family and just my husband for a romantic getaway. It is great for everything and has the reputation of acceptance for all, to boot. 11/10 stars.

Ferndale

Nestled right around the corner from the heart of Detroit is Ferndale. When you think gay destinations in Michigan, it's likely one of the first ones that comes to mind — and rightfully so. Redoute described the sheer abundance of support he sees in Ferndale.

"Yesterday, I was just riding around Ferndale and I saw that there was this mechanic shop that had a rainbow flag behind the window," Redoute said. "It's like everywhere you look, you see a

rainbow flag."

And if the sense of support wasn't enough, popular queer bars like Soho make Ferndale the perfect spot for a night out on the town. Redoute argued, though, that the summer evening air in Ferndale was an experience in and of itself.

"I think that even being on the corner of Woodward, at Como's, having a night out with friends and just being at one of those tables in the summertime with Woodward cars going by and stuff — I think the energy is one of my favorites, especially for dinner and hanging out with friends," he said.

That Michigan Guy's Ferndale Vibe Check: *"Fabulous Ferndale" is a place to be fully you. Wear what you want, hold hands with who you want, and let the good times roll. You'll also not catch a street without a rainbow flag flying here. I held hands for the first time*

with someone I was in relationship with in Ferndale (in public, gasp, in the 2013 version of myself), so it holds a special place in my heart.

Frankfort

While the four-hour drive up toward the tip of the mitten may scare some away, for the more adventurous travelers, Redoute said that Frankfort is a destination that won't disappoint.

Frankfort is a cute, small town with all the summer staples you're looking for in a vacation, Redoute said. He added a visitor could go for a morning run through town and practically see the whole place — Redoute said when you visit, it feels like you "run the town."

Redoute noted that his family has been going to Frankfort since he was little. He said the desire to bring queer energy to the space has been personal for him. "The

reason why I specifically want it to be queer is because it holds a special place in my heart, location-wise," Redoute said. "I would love it if I could just bring that energy because I know the queer energy. I know it's wonderful. I would love for that to kind of feed into other places that are also just great places to go."

"I love having specific spots that you can go and feel your queer self and live out every fantasy, whatever you want and feel so totally comfortable," he added. "But I like to spice things up. I want to expand — I want the whole world to feel that way."

Redoute said when he'd visit when he was younger, he'd notice the occasional comment about how he presented himself, but as he got older, the comments began to fade. During a recent visit, Redoute said he came across a situation that affirmed his aspirations for the area.

"I went there with my husband and my family and we were walking on the street and we saw another gay couple and I was like, 'How is this possible?' I couldn't believe Frankfort, this place I grew up in that I always kind of saw as a little bit more conservative, had this other gay couple there," he said.

Redoute said he hopes that others within the community will take note of these "small towns with good vibes."

That Michigan Guy's Frankfort Vibe Check: *Frankfort isn't known for its rainbow flags like Ferndale. But as the world becomes more accepting of the queer community, my husband and I have also "pushed the boundaries" and shown some PDA walking through town — with no issues. We even met up with other gay couple friends last time we were there (which I could never have fathomed when*

See **Off the Beaten Path**, page 28



Pelados Beach Hostel. Courtesy photo

◀ Brazil Nudist Hostel

Continued from page 24

expression and self-knowledge within my philosophy of life, which is nudism,” clarifying that the idea of “freedom” is always based on respect for the limits of others.

The beach house sleeps up to 12 people in three simple but comfortable rooms (private and shared), equipped with fans or air conditioning, in the sunny town almost all year round. Outside, there is a swimming pool with a space full of camping plants, the perfect place for a harmless lizard to sunbathe every day. Nudity is allowed and encouraged in all areas, and the rules are the same as in any naturist place: photos and filming only with prior consent.

Guests who don’t want to stay the night can purchase a drop-in pass for a block of time, typically five hours. “Sometimes we organize events with music, poetry, soirees, karaoke, DJs, barbecues and local drinks like caipirinha by the pool,” he says.

Although unknown to many foreign tourists, the northeastern region of Brazil is one of the warmest in the country and enjoys a mild winter, perfect for nudism

and water sports year-round.

Beyond the freeing feeling of ditching your clothes at the door, visiting Pelados offers opportunities to make friends, flirt and get to know a new place, although most guests are Brazilian. Michael Defuster, 57, a recent guest hailing from Belgium, said he was attracted to the “creativity and free spirit” of the hostel. It was a place, he said, “where you can be yourself, and [where] the nudist experience is enhanced by artistic expressions on one of the most beautiful tropical coastlines in the country.”

Reginaldo looks after everything closely and is always naked, as are his half-dozen employees. The businessman had already created a nudist hostel in the past in another city but decided to move to another Brazilian state when he realized that the current location would offer a wider range of services such as restaurants, bars, pharmacies and other traveler amenities.

Reginaldo has extensive experience in hospitality, having worked in the industry when he lived in Miami and Paris and is fluent in English, Spanish and French.

“The experience here is always incredible and liberating; the absence of clothes creates an atmosphere of acceptance and relaxation, and the feeling of freedom without clothes is also very pleasant.”

— Gerson Pereira, a hostel guest

Nudism has always been part of his life. For Reginaldo, nudity disinhibits and brings people together more quickly than in a “normal” hostel.

The profile of guests varies according to age, says the owner. Thirty percent are between 20 and 30, 50% between 30 and 45 and 20% of guests are over 45. About 40% of guests are couples. Reginaldo says that although the hostel will soon offer one day a week for women, the greatest demand for accommodation is from men.

Gerson Pereira, 39, a recent hostel guest, had traveled there for the second time. “The

experience here is always incredible and liberating; the absence of clothes creates an atmosphere of acceptance and relaxation, and the feeling of freedom without clothes is also very pleasant,” says Pereira, a Brazilian who works in foreign trade. Bruno Magalhães, 34, visited Pelados from elsewhere in Brazil. “Being in an environment where nudity is normalized and devoid of judgments appealed to me. In addition to the feeling of freedom and a more genuine connection with other travelers, it’s also a way of challenging social norms,” he told BTL.

In the past, the lack of training for hotel staff in serving LGBTQ+ guests often left visitors embarrassed when they asked for a double bed at check-in. Although this embarrassing situation is in the past, many LGBTQ+ tourists still prefer to stay in spaces flying the rainbow flag. Most of the time, the owners of these accommodations are also members of the community, and they more willing to recommend outings for the public, such as parties and discos that are not mentioned on more traditional tours.

Reginaldo stresses that nudity is not essentially linked to sex, despite common misconceptions. “Gay men are used to more hidden environments focused on sex,” he explains, “but having a space that offers this freedom, but which can be much more than that, is something out of the ordinary.” Asked about those who seek ulterior motives there, he is direct: “We’re not a sauna; we’re a space where men get naked. Anything can happen, including nothing, and one of the hostel’s main appeals is acceptance of the body without being bound by standards,” pointing out that all body types are welcome.

Beyond Pelados, there are a few other standout LGBTQ-friendly vacation spots located in Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian couple Alexandre Veiga and Luciano Amaral, together for 21 years, opened a guesthouse, Pousada Solar do Redentor, geared toward LGBTQ+ guests in 2016. Located about a half mile from the train that takes visitors to the famous Corcovado tourist spot, the accommodation has a swimming pool, barbecue area, steam/dry sauna as well as seven spacious overnight rooms. Despite not being nudist, guests feel free to express their feelings, especially couples, without fear of prejudice. For Veiga, guests are looking not only for freedom and safety, but also for a way to make new friends during their stay on Brazilian land.

In the Costa Verde region of Paraty, around 168 miles from Rio de Janeiro, Márcia Assumpção, 53, transformed the two rooms of her house made from ecological (recyclable) materials into a naturist lodge about a year ago. With capacity for up to five people, the Brazilian

usually hosts families and groups of friends, who, as well as experiencing life naked, can enjoy the natural beauty nearby, such as the beaches and waterfalls. For Márcia, nudity represents freedom and lightness. As well as hosting events, she also promotes naturist events with live music in houses with swimming pools in Rio — all without clothes.

In a country with just over 211 million inhabitants, the existence of only one



Guests enjoying the accommodations. Courtesy photo

nudist accommodation specifically for the queer community is an important first step toward greater acceptance. Reginaldo plans to expand the business in the future, considering the wide availability of Brazil’s stunning beaches, year-round pleasant climate, great cuisine and vibrant local culture.

Pelados Beach Hostel is 50 miles from the airport in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte. From there, use local transportation to Tibau do Sul. Hostel rates start at \$32 USD per person, per night. Visit [instagram.com/peladosbeachhostelpipa](https://www.instagram.com/peladosbeachhostelpipa) for details.

Get Tickets Now!

bit.ly/3VM86iQ

STUDIO

Celebrating 35 years

September 28, 2024

Motor City Casino

7:00 PM - 12:00 AM

Open bar. Strolling dinner. Live DJ. Dancing. Free valet parking.

Sponsored By:

JPMORGAN CHASE & Co.

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993

PRIDESOURCE

Are You Ready To Introduce Your Business to the LGBTQ+ Community?

PRIDESOURCE.COM/ADVERTISE

BTL | September 5, 2024 27

THE FINEST IN ADULT ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BEST PRICES!

UPTOWN
BOOKSTORES
ADULT VIDEO

2 LOCATIONS

WWW.UPTOWNADULT.COM

16541 Woodward Ave.
at McNichols next to "Deja Vu"
Highland Park
313.869.9477

16401 W. 8 Mile
Between Greenfield & Southfield
Detroit
313.836.0647

Hours:
Mon-Sat 10am - 9pm
Sun 12 - 6pm

Off the Beaten Path

Continued from page 25

I came out over a decade ago) and didn't feel any type of way. While this is the viewpoint of one person, I think Frankfort has a lot to offer, and I'd love for the queer community to get to know it better.

Traverse City

For the same amount of drivetime it takes to get from Detroit to Frankfort, travelers could find themselves in Traverse City. Redoute described the famous Michigan spot as picturesque.

On a recent visit, he went on a tour of some of the local wineries near Traverse City. As a self-proclaimed mocktail fan, he was surprised to find himself enjoying the fine selection of wines they had to offer. And even in the moments when those postcard-perfect views seemed to be beyond that of what Michigan usually offers, Redoute found himself catching a glimpse of Grand Traverse Bay glimmering in the distance.

Want more queer glamor beyond all the wineries? Pop on downtown, which Redoute said offered a developed feel. "It really blew me away — the beauty that

Frankfort, Michigan. Photo: Ryan Redoute

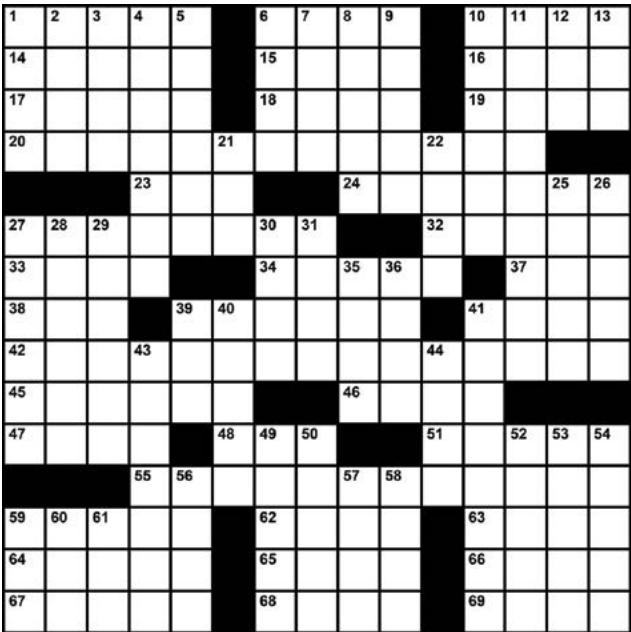
Traverse City could offer," he said. "I feel like it almost feels a little upscale because it is a more developed downtown."

He added that there's plenty to do in the area, from Sleeping Bear Dunes to Crystal Lake. And even just a short drive outside

See **Off the Beaten Path**, page 30

Beauty Beyond Labels

@IVEYSALON
IVEYSALON.COM
100 S FOURTH AVE,
ANN ARBOR 48105



All the Way Out

Across

- 1 Quintain rhyme scheme
- 6 Nicky, in "Funny Girl"
- 10 One born in a Cukor title
- 14 Attachments for fake glasses
- 15 Coin for Kahlo
- 16 Via, briefly
- 17 Perineum, in slang

- 18 Russian singing duo
- 19 Steed stopper
- 20 Start of a Britney Griner quote
- 23 Guy who avoids sex with women
- 24 Dustup in "A League of Their Own"
- 27 More of the quote
- 32 Dean character without a cause
- 33 Line from "Rent"?
- 34 Rings one's chimes
- 37 Maugham's "Cakes and ____"

- 38 MGM rival, once
- 39 Rainbow T-shirt, perhaps
- 41 "La Traviata" solo, e.g.
- 42 More of the quote
- 45 "Game of Thrones" star Emilia
- 46 Longtime NFL coach Chuck
- 47 "It ____ Necessarily So"
- 48 AAA handout
- 51 Former NFL player Tuaolo
- 55 End of the quote
- 59 Virgin Mary's messenger
- 62 Fall out of contention
- 63 Give a lot of mouth
- 64 Drag queen's garment
- 65 Added stipulations
- 66 Buster Brown's dog
- 67 Music style for Ricky Martin
- 68 Head honcho
- 69 Aspen vehicle

Down

- 1 Climactic start
- 2 The African Queen, e.g.
- 3 "Yeah, right!"
- 4 Fund-raiser for AIDS re-search, e.g.
- 5 In the rear, of a seaman
- 6 Withdraws, with "out"
- 7 Angry in., for example
- 8 John Jacob, who went to the bottom with the Titanic
- 9 Type of trade
- 10 Dance floor flasher
- 11 Cinema's first sex symbol
- 12 He gave Jackie her O
- 13 Score for Glenn Burke
- 21 Get behind

- 22 Cather's "One of ____"
- 25 Joan of Arc keepsake
- 26 Not rosy
- 27 Watergate judge John
- 28 Acid neutralizer
- 29 Beefeater, for example
- 30 Anatomical passage
- 31 Tina's "What's Love Got ____ with It"
- 35 "Coal Miner's Daughter" singer
- 36 Blocks off the toy aisle
- 39 Fab Five syllable for many a straight guy
- 40 Michael Musto's tidbits
- 41 A great variety
- 43 Unlike the Dodger of "Oliver!"
- 44 Pleasured orally
- 49 BBC sitcom
- 50 Copland composed for it
- 52 Response to an on-line personal
- 53 It's low for a butch's voice
- 54 Paid to play
- 56 "Frozen" queen
- 57 Gets the bottom line
- 58 Untouchable head
- 59 Certain plugs
- 60 Org. that likes to shoot off
- 61 Come together

See p. 17 for answers



 international EXPERIENCE



EXPERIENCE THE WORLD — NO PLANE TICKET REQUIRED



Hosting an international high school student is one of the **BEST** ways to learn about other parts of the world and make an authentic connection.

When you open your home and heart to an exchange student, you get so much in return and become part of a global family that can last a lifetime.

Learn more:

iE-USA.org





Are you a cisgender man in a relationship with another man?

Join our research study to earn up to \$410 and free HIV/STI tests! Scan below for more information.



Email us at verve-cohort@umich.edu





Crown Pharmacy

- Transfer your prescriptions today
- Specializing in providing world class HIV pharmaceutical care
- Free HIV Testing
- Pickup free at home HIV testing kits
- Free Syphilis testing
- Blister Packaging Available
- Free Delivery!



Toll-Free Available 24 Hours/Day: **1-800-381-7518**

www.crownpharmacy.com



24401 Plymouth Rd, Redford, MI 48239

313-532-DRUG (3784)

CrownPharmacy1@aol.com

Hours: M-F 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Closed Weekends and Holidays

◀ Off the Beaten Path

Continued from page 28

the area, as Redoute noted that there were lots of possible day trips within 30 minutes of Traverse.

That Michigan Guy's Traverse City Vibe Check: *Traverse City is one of the biggest cities in upper lower-peninsula Michigan and has so many activities to offer — it's even where Pete Buttigieg and his husband Chasten own a home. In the time I've been there as an adult, it doesn't feel unsafe in any way and more liberal than conservative. I would say it's almost like a mini Ann Arbor, but surrounding a stunning bay and offering fabulous wineries.*

South Haven

Opposite Detroit on the west side of the state is a "gem" by the water. With locals showing welcoming Michigander energy, and Waters View Inn proudly boasting a Pride flag, Redoute said South Haven is yet another spot bursting with queer potential.

Redoute first learned more about the spot from friends who already understood its significance. "I told other people about it and they were very like, 'Oh yeah, South Haven is so cute, we end up going all the

time,'" he said. "It started clicking in my head, what this place was for other people, and it made me want to spread the word."

Redoute said the spot has "Michigan magic," noting the breeze coming off Lake Michigan. Much like with Frankfort, Redoute's aim is to spotlight travel destinations he feels are safe for queer explorers with his TikTok and Instagram accounts — South Haven is now on his radar as, perhaps, one of those places. "Growing up in Michigan I never felt like there was a ton of super welcoming spaces — Michigan did feel a little bit conservative growing up," he said. "That's actually been one of my biggest missions with my content: highlighting the parts of Michigan that I've always known and even making them more of what I want them to be."

Redoute added that a feeling of safety is a necessity. "I feel like you need those spaces where you can just fully be yourself," he said. "I feel like we need that [on] a vacation level, anywhere we go."

That Michigan Guy's South Haven Vibe Check: *When I visited recently, vibes were great but I didn't stay long enough to get the best read. My husband and I loved our time there and never felt we received any negative energy from anyone. The manager of the Waters View Inn is even a member of the queer community. So it's lookin' good!*

DETROIT FOR LIFE

NEIGHBORHOOD BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM

**We got money to beautify
our neighborhood.**

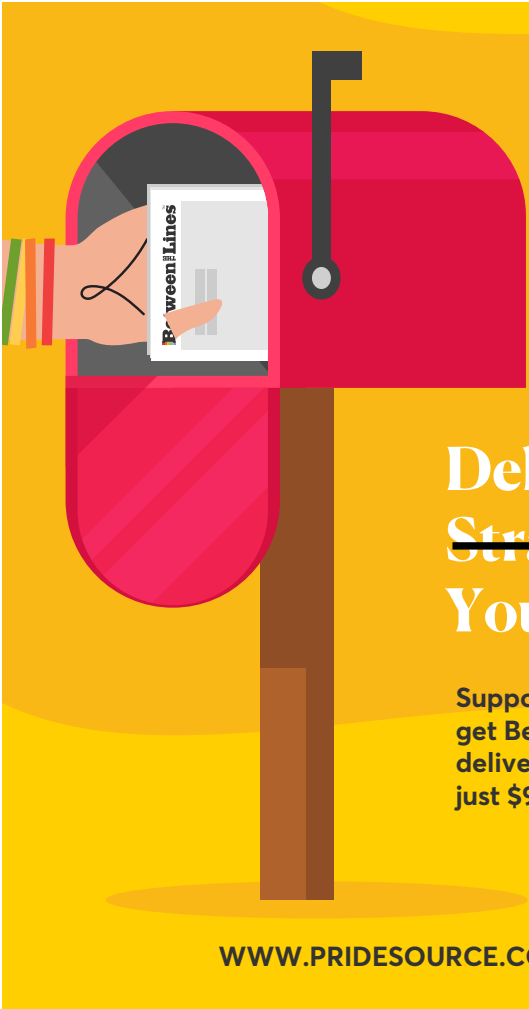
**All because
I live in Detroit!**



DetroitMI.gov/DetroitForLife

Offering Limitless Opportunities





Delivered Straight to Your Mailbox

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and
get Between the Lines
delivered to your door for
just \$95/year or \$10/month.

WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE



SUBARU

at Hodges

SFF-24 **FORESTER**



Come See
Our Inventory

**HODGES
SUBARU**
Metro Detroit's "Subaru-Only Dealer"

21205 Woodward Ave • **Ferndale** • MI • 48220
248.547.8800 • www.hodgessubaru.com
HOURS: **MONDAY** - 9:00A.M. - 7:00P.M.
TUESDAY - FRIDAY - 9:00A.M. - 6:00P.M.
SATURDAY - 10:00A.M. - 2:00P.M.

EVERYDAY!

EXCELLENT SERVICE • OUTSTANDING SELECTION • FANTASTIC PRICES....

Supporting the Community Since Before it was Cool.

100% Local Agents. 100% Client Focused.
Trillium Real Estate Helps People
Make Good Decisions.



Sandi & Linda
www.trilliumrealtors.com

Serving the Greater Ann Arbor Area
734-302-3011



TRILLIUM
REAL ESTATE

Funky Ferndale Art Fair

Nine Mile @ Woodward

September 20-22

Friday 4:00 - 7:30 • Saturday 10:00 - 7:30 • Sunday 11:00 - 6:00
Nine Mile West of Woodward
 110 Juried Artists • 12 Local Authors • Fun Art Projects • Acoustic Music
 Downtown Ferndale Restaurants and Shops • New Parking Structure
Twice as Funky as the Average Fine Art Fair



Woods



Humphrey



Bond



Altman



Zupico



Saunders



Chen



Tisdale



Cooke



Fritz



Morgan



Kozlowski

Make It - Wear It

Decorate sunglasses, create a hat or scarf from recycled containers, make a wrist rattle...
 Sign up at **FunkyFerndaleArtFair.com**

Authors Tent

Meet Michigan Authors • Book signings



FunkyFerndaleArtFair.com

